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“SHEBA.”

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By “RITA,”

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“GRETCHEN,” ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

A NEW IDEA.

THE next afternoon when Sheba came home, she found Count Pharamond established in the drawing-room, entertaining and being entertained by her mother.

The door was open and she had looked in on passing, so there was no help but to enter and return the count's polite greeting.

He thought she looked quite as handsome as on the previous night. Her face was flushed with rapid exercise and the cool wind; her great eyes shone like stars beneath the dark velvet brim of her hat.

There was something eager and glad about the expression of her face, for she had just parted from Meredith, who had met her and walked half-way home with her. They had discussed many things, chiefly music; and he had told her he should remain here with the company for at least two months more; if, after then, he had to proceed to Queensland, he should leave the child with old Müller, so as not to interrupt his studies.

“You are doing him so much good,” he had added gratefully. “He is not so dull or old-fashioned as he used to be, and he talks of you so much. I think you have quite won his heart.”

As she shook hands with Count Pharamond those words were still ringing in her ears.

She felt too happy to be distant and cold, as on the previous night, and though she avoided his eyes, and felt his compliments jar on her ear, she yet was gracious enough to satisfy her mother.

In his way Count Pharamond was a brilliant and cultivated man, a man of the world and of society such as Sheba and her mother had never entered—the light, frothy, brilliant society of French *salons*, and London drawing-rooms, and clubs.

He talked to them of celebrated people, of art, fashion, politics; talked well and brilliantly, but with a certain superficial polish that Sheba's keen ear detected.

Still it was pleasant to hear of that great world from which the ocean separated her, and of people whose names were only familiar to her through newspaper gossip or the medium of their own works : Dickens, Thackeray, Lever, George Eliot ; these great names were rattled over by the glib tongue of Pharamond as if they were those of everyday personal acquaintances.

He had anecdotes of each, amusing or interesting, as the case might be. But nothing interested Sheba so much as to hear of George Eliot, whose "*Mill on the Floss*" she had just been revolving in, and of whose history she was entirely ignorant.

She noted as she put her eager questions that her mother and the count exchanged looks, that Mrs. Levison seemed fidgety and uncomfortable, and that Pharamond himself began to fence with her simple, direct inquiries, and gradually changed the subject.

However, he had contrived to make half an hour pass very quickly and pleasantly, and Sheba had almost forgotten her antagonism of the previous night.

When her mother pressed him to come again, Sheba eagerly seconded the invitation. "And you must tell me more of my adored authoress," she cried enthusiastically. "I would sooner be Marian Evans than the Queen on her throne!"

"Ah!" murmured the count, as he held the small warm hand for a moment in his own. "Ah, mademoiselle ! the faiths, the enthusiasms of youth. How I envy you them. They are so beautiful, while they last."

"I hope," said Sheba gravely, "mine will last always."

Then he bowed low again, and the door closed on him, and Sheba tossed off her hat, and smoothed back the thick, heavy hair above her brow. Mrs. Levison looked at her with something of impatience and irritation in her glance.

"I do wish, Sheba," she said, "that you had not such an unfortunate knack of stumbling on questionable subjects for conversation. I positively blushed when you would persist in talking of that—writer—to the count, and he was most uncomfortable. There has been quite a scandal about her in England. A woman who has no religion, who makes her intellect her God—believes in free love, and has gone to live with a man who has left his own wife and family for her sake. These are the simple facts, and every one knows them. Men of course make a fuss over her, because she is clever ; but no *lady* would visit her, she lives quite apart from society."

"She ought to be glad of that and to write much better for it," said Sheba. "I don't know what use society is to an author or an artist, except to distract and bore them."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Levison tartly, "you don't see any use in morality either. One would think so to hear you talk. I can't think where you pick up your extraordinary ideas—unless that old curiosity whose child you teach is entertaining you with some of his."

"Mother," said the girl, suddenly growing very pale, "you never asked me *whose* child I am teaching; you would not listen to anything I said on the subject, but you are wrong if you think it is the old German, Herr Müller, who is my—my employer. The child I teach is the son of Mr. Paul Meredith, who sings at the opera."

"I'm sure I don't care," snapped Mrs. Levison. "It doesn't make the fact of your teaching any better, rather worse, if anything. You ought to be ashamed to go on with this foolish scheme, knowing how we disapprove of it. Hex is coming home next week on purpose to speak to you about it. I am in perfect terror lest Count Pharamond should hear of it. What would he think?"

"It doesn't concern me what he or any one else thinks," said Sheba proudly. "You know my reasons for doing this. If you want to blame any one, blame your husband; he has always disliked me and insulted me. This place has never been a home—never."

"You are so headstrong, so ungrateful," lamented Mrs. Levison. "I'm sure you will break my heart yet."

Sheba turned to her with a sudden impulse of tenderness.

"Don't say that, mother," she pleaded; "I do love you, and I wish I could please you, but this marriage of yours has put a gulf between us; nothing is as it was. Your husband dislikes me; Dolly persecutes me; and you—you think everything I do is wrong." The tears had brimmed into her eyes, her lips trembled. Mrs. Levison rose impatiently.

"Oh! make me no scenes, for goodness' sake, child," she said. "You are too old to be punished for disobedience; you must take your own way; only I shall never be the same to you so long as you keep up this foolish idea of teaching. I consider you are degrading yourself and me."

Then she left the room to avoid further controversy, and Sheba sank slowly down on the chair beside her, and leaning her head on her hands, sat for long gazing into the clear wood fire that burned on the hearth. The old cry was sounding in her ears—the cry that embittered her childhood and darkened her youth: "No one cares for me, no one wants me; oh! why was I ever born?"

There was not even a dumb creature now to rub its soft head

against her knee, or speak out love with bright wistful eyes as Billy had been wont to do. They had all been offered up as a sacrifice to Mr. Levison's splendid house—that house where her coming or going gladdened no one—concerned no one—save she was needed for some selfish scheme.

"They would be glad to be rid of me," she thought bitterly. "Dolly was quite right in what she said. This man must have been asked here for a purpose. They would like him to marry me, perhaps." She shuddered as she thought of the bold eyes, the smiling sensual lips. "Never," she told herself; "I would sooner die." A voice at her ear startled her—a voice repeating her own words which unconsciously she had spoken aloud.

"Sooner die than—what, Miss Sheba? It is a terrible alternative!"

She sprang to her feet blushing and confused. Beside her stood Noel Hill.

"*You*," she cried gladly. "Why, how did you come? I never heard you."

"No, you were too deep in thought. The servant showed me in; she said your mother was dressing, so I fear it is rather late for a conventional call. Still, I am glad to find you are visible."

"Sit down," said Sheba, drawing a chair near to the fire. "It is very cold this evening; one of these dreadful southerly winds. You look tired; where have you been?"

"Doing parish work," he said, taking the chair and watching the girl's graceful movements as she stirred the fire into a blaze and lit the lamp near by. "This is a very different place to West Shore," he went on presently, "and my rector is not very energetic, so a great deal devolves on me."

"I know Mr. Ransom by repute, as well as personally through his services and sermons," said Sheba. "What a curious man he is to be in the Church."

"There are many curious men in the Church," said Noel Hill smiling, "and always will be," he added more seriously, "as long as such things as advowsons and gifts of livings exist. But tell me, what was disturbing you just now, and what would you rather die than do?"

"Marry a man I disliked, and could not respect," said Sheba, colouring warmly beneath the gaze of those clear, searching eyes.

"Marry!" echoed Noel Hill, and his face grew a shade paler. "Has anything been said to you about—about that?"

"Mother would only be too thankful if any eligible suitor would offer," said the girl bitterly. "I foresee many more battles in store for me; I am like a square peg in a round hole here; I have never fitted my place and I never shall."

The young clergyman looked at her somewhat sadly.

"I was so in hopes that matters were better," he said. "Are you sure that you try to make the best of your position; bring your will more into subjection to theirs?"

"Why should I do that?" burst out Sheba impetuously. "I am not a child any longer. I know right from wrong, and shams from reality, and this house is full of shams; even my brother is quite changed: there is not a genuine feeling or impulse allowed. Every one tries to deceive some one else. Mother, Mr. Levison; Mr. Levison, mother; the child, her father and her step-mother both; and the united family, the world at large, which they call society. I will not do it; I never have and I never shall. If I don't like these vulgar, purse-proud people who come here, why should I pretend I do? They don't like me, I know. My mother says it is my fault, and perhaps it is; but I find books more interesting than persons, and therefore I won't leave the library to waste my evenings listening to the scandals and gossip of a set of money-worshipping Jews. It makes me sick to hear them talk," she went on impetuously. "Mrs. Abrahams abusing Mrs. Levi; and Mrs. Levi criticizing Mrs. Moss, and her dress, and her house, and her servants; and each of them summing up their neighbours' incomes to a penny, and estimating the success of their entertainments by the amount of money spent on them; and this is the life I am expected to live."

"It is hard," said Noel Hill thoughtfully. He was trying to grasp the fact that this girl had got beyond his teaching and authority; that she was a woman now, with a woman's soul, and that life was getting harder for her than even he had ever feared it would be. "Very hard," he went on thoughtfully, "but still, they cannot force you to marry any one you do not care for. Is there—is there any one they specially wish you to accept?"

"Oh!" said Sheba blushing hotly, "I have only Dolly's word for that, and you know what *she* is."

"Yes," he said, laughing with a sudden sense of relief. "I shall never forget the way in which she entertained me on the occasion of my first visit. It is a pity the child should be spoilt for the want of training."

"She will never get *that* at home," said Sheba. "Her father indulges her in everything, and mother gives way because it makes things smooth; she is a little demon for mischief-making, and she repeats all she hears with any amount of exaggeration."

"Indeed, I am afraid your home is far from pleasant," said Noel Hill slowly. "Let us hope, however, that things may mend. Are you still bent on teaching?"

"Yes," Sheba answered decidedly. "It is my one pleasure now. It does take me out of my life for a few hours at all events."

"I have been thinking," he said, "of a plan which will give you occupation and relief too. You remember telling me long ago about your admiration for women authors? Why don't you try to

write? You have talent, keen perception of character, vivid imagination and great natural facility in the putting together of ideas and fancies. Think of it. I don't say that you will succeed in doing anything very remarkable just at first, but I should strongly advise you to make the effort."

"And then——" said Sheba, rising and facing him with flushed cheeks and eager eyes.

"Then," he said, as he also rose at sound of the dressing bell, "we might see about publishing. I have a friend who is junior partner in a large publishing firm in London; if your book was worth anything he could tell me so; in any case the scheme is worth a trial."

"Worth it! I should think so," cried the girl eagerly. "How good of you to think of it. I shall never be dull or lonely now."

"Indeed, I hope so," said Noel Hill earnestly. "Your mind is too active, it must not be allowed to feed upon itself; give it employment and I think you will be less discontented, even if not positively happy."

"Happy!" said the girl with a long deep sigh. "Ah! shall I ever be that? Sometimes I doubt it."

The young man's heart gave a sudden swift throb as he met those dark passionate eyes. The thought that had sprung to life, echoed on and on long after he had left that girlish presence:

"Would to Heaven I could make you so."

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### A LITTLE DUST.

SHEBA went straight to her room as the door closed on Noel Hill. She felt she must be alone to think out the magnitude of the idea presented to her.

The possibility of writing had often floated dimly through her mind, but she had deemed herself, as yet, far too ignorant and impetuous to do anything deserving the honour of authorship, or publication.

It was no light thing to undertake, for nothing shallow or superficial would ever have contented her; but she felt that her ignorance of the world, and of life, and the narrow limits of her own experience were all against her.

Yet had not the Brontës lived out of the world, in a wild, lonely country district, and surrounded by all that was hard, unlovely and commonplace? Had not her adored Marian Evans been only a farmer's daughter, and brought up in a dull Methodist circle? Had not the great Charles Dickens himself begun life as a lawyer's clerk? Yet each and all had burst the trammels of their surroundings, and made their mark. True, they had all possessed genius of no uncom-

mon order, and she—she was but a young, ignorant, scarce-educated colonist ; still she felt she had it within her to dare and to achieve. She loved work, and was ready to plunge into it heart and soul. It promised her a rich feast of mental dissipation. It was the one thing that could atone for the emptiness of home ; she might rise above it and its petty troubles, and make for herself a deeper, broader life, that would dwarf into insignificance the mere routine of duties and occupations such as most women lived for.

All these thoughts swept like an impetuous tide through her mind, and for a time took no definite shape. But after a while a little chill crept over that first ardour of enthusiasm. How was she to begin ? What form or shape was her work to take for itself ?

She pushed the heavy hair from her brow, which ached with feverish excitement and the strain of long thought.

"I will ask Herr Müller," she said to herself. "He is so clever. He will be able to advise me."

Then she changed her dress, and went down into the library to read quietly till dinner was over, and after that went into the drawing-room, where a small coterie of Cohens and Leveys were assembled, and, at her mother's request, sang and played for them, as she very rarely condescended to do. It was better than cards, she told herself, and she could think without being interrupted by the perpetual chatter respecting money and dress, or domestic news, which last always took the shape of a prospective, or just completed addition to the tribe of Israel, on the part of one or other of its fruitful vines.

She slept but little that night ; and being too conscientious to neglect a duty for any personal interest, she gave her young charge his usual lessons before ever broaching the subject which filled her thoughts to Herr Müller.

"I wanted to consult you," she said at last, as little Paul trotted off to fetch his coat and cap for their usual walk, "if you could spare me a few moments."

The old man looked up from his music-copying. "Consult me ? but certainly, *mein Fräulein*. If you like, I will put on my hat, and we shall take our walks together."

It was an odd thing about Franz Müller, that when excited or interested on any subject, he could talk quite fluently and with scarcely any foreign idioms, but in ordinary fragmentary conversation his German nationality proclaimed itself at once.

"Will you come with us ?" cried Sheba eagerly. "Oh ! that is kind of you ; I have been longing for a talk."

"I thought," said the old man laughing, "that our last talk had frightened you. You want no more Buddhism I suppose, eh ?"

"Indeed," said Sheba indignantly, "I was not frightened. I would like to hear a great deal more on the subject. But, no, it was not of that I wished to speak." And she told him briefly, and

as calmly as she could, the suggestion of Noel Hill, and her own great longing to comply with it.

He listened attentively and seriously, looking ever and again at the glowing eager face with its changeful expressions. What an ardent, eager, enthusiastic soul this was! He sighed to think of what its future might be. He had known so many enthusiasts, so many gifted minds, and of them all none had passed through the world's furnace unscathed, few the better for the ordeal.

“To write,” he said thoughtfully; “well, I have considered often you might do that, and do it well. If you feel it within you, it must come out. Only I advise but one thing, never write unless you have something to say that is worth saying. There is too much mediocrity in everything now-a-days. Every one wants to rush into print with their trash, or their errors, or their filth as the case may be. Literature is a vast sewer into which the ignorant and the vile, as well as the scholar and the thinker, pour their several contributions, and the filter which might be of use in carrying those contributions to the mind of the public, *viz.*, press censorship, is rapidly becoming useless by reason of interests, bribes, ignorance, prejudice, and the like. You are very young, and of life you know nothing. Your soul is as clear as your eyes. The deceits and coquettices and pruriences of your sex are a sealed book as yet. There is a gospel of worldly wisdom, which is the very essence of selfishness, and you have never turned of it one leaf. Of what then would you write? Of what is in your own pure soul; great thoughts, impossible dreams such as poets love. You will sing to deaf ears, *mein Fräulein*. The world doesn't heed, and doesn't want to heed, and you will waste your brains, and your health, and break your tender heart—for I think it is tender, though you seem so cold—and all for nothing.”

Sheba grew very pale. Her eyes, troubled and tear-filled, looked out at the vista of green fields and waving trees, and a sense of heavy desolation and despair oppressed her.

“You would not advise me to try?” she said at last.

His quick ear noticed the trembling of her voice, and he knew his words had hurt her, and felt sorry.

“I never give advice,” he said gently. “It is a thing people only ask for when their minds are made up what they shall do; but frankly, of woman's work I have not much opinion. They lack the patience, the steadiness, the studious thought, which marks the capacity of man's brains. True, there have been clever women, but then they lacked most feminine charms, and became notorious as much for personal eccentricity as for so-called genius. They have never done anything great in art, save as copyists or executants. They lack creative power, or we should have had a female Beethoven or Michael Angelo by this time.”

“There has been Properzia of Bologna,” suggested Sheba timidly.

"One instance to quote against hundreds, my dear. Where is the female prototype of Praxiteles or Raffaelle, of Rubens or Angelico, Sophocles, Homer, Virgil, or to come to later days, Shakespeare, or Shelley, or Byron? It cannot be found. It never *will* be found, even though we throw open our academies and colleges and art schools, as they begin to cry to us to do."

"Still," persisted Sheba, "they have done something. They may do more with better training and education."

He laughed grimly. "They will write sensational fiction, whose doubtful morality enlightens one sex and disgusts the other. They will paint pretty feeble pictures of babies and animals and flowers, or dabble in sculpture with a due care for drapery and fringes and buttons! That I grant you, more—I will say ten years hence."

"You are not encouraging," said Sheba disappointedly.

"Nay, I but speak in my plain, gruff, German fashion. I said before, if you feel it within you to write, do it, and do your best; and do not haste too much, but give nothing forth to the world that has not on it the stamp of care and earnest thought. In any case work won't harm you. Perhaps it may be a safety valve."

She laughed. The colour came back to her face and lips. "I mean to try," she said with a flash of the dark starry eyes. "And I will take your advice, I will not hurry over my work!"

"You will spoil your youth," grumbled the old man. "Without pleasure and gaiety, the life of the young is like a spring flower that an early frost has frozen ere it is fully opened. Be content as you are; you will be a beautiful woman one day. Men will love you. You may be a happy wife, with love in your heart and children at your breast. That is the best life for a woman. Nature meant it, and she is wiser than man, and kinder too, if we would but believe it."

Sheba's face grew warm. She thought of love as her childish dreams had pictured it. Alas! those dreams had looked so far away that she scarcely could realize them, as having played an important part in her life.

"I think," she said gravely, "I shall not be a woman whom men will love. I do not wish it."

He smiled, his odd grim smile.

"That," he said, "is probably a reason why *they* will. But time will show."

They walked on in silence for some moments. Presently he said:

"Did any one suggest this to you, or was it a thought, a desire, of your own?"

"I thought of it years ago," said Sheba colouring, "but it seemed to have gone out of my mind till a friend, the clergyman of whom I spoke to you, suggested it to me again."

"Ah," said the old man, "what is he like, this clergyman, young, clever, or conventional?"

"I think," said Sheba, "he is very good. He's not a bit like a clergyman."

"Not stiff, and solemn, and canting, eh?" asked the old German grimly.

"No," she said readily, "far otherwise. He is very clever, I think, and he works very hard."

The old man nodded. "Ask him," he said, with one of his odd smiles, "to explain to you the doctrine of the Trinity. Ask him, too, what priesthood has done for religion, save hamper and distort any purity or truth it once possessed."

"Do you think," Sheba asked timidly, "that our clergy, the clergy of the Reformed Church, are no better than the Roman Catholic priests?"

He laughed aloud, and his eyes flashed beneath their thick grey brows.

"Do I *believe*? Oh, child, child, if I could make you see for one moment the mass of lies, follies and superstitions that embroider the priestly garment, whether white, or violet, or black; whether the bishop's snowy surplice, or the cardinal's scarlet robe! What is underneath? Man—a man, mortal, erring, sinful as any other. What has sanctified him? why is he holy, and all the rest of mankind vile? Because another anointed official has laid hands on him! Five hundred years ago the world believed that the pillars of Hercules marked the western boundaries of the earth. There are antiquities of doctrine and faith just as absurd, for which so-called holy men fight tooth and nail to this very day. They would, if they *could*, govern the whole human race by the rigid letter of ecclesiastical law. Fortunately they cannot. Their day has gone by. The cry of the age is progress—and progress no longer means submissive acquiescence in what has been laid down dogmatically in bygone years of superstition. The mind of man is struggling out of swaddling bands, and demands to walk alone on a path of knowledge commensurate with its wants. The voice of the pulpit alone holds it back, crying, 'Refrain, oh, impious one! Question not, seek not, doubt not. Thus far and no farther shall inquiry go!'.... The babe is fed on milk, the child on faith; but shall milk and faith diet the body and the mind of man? True, there may be things which that mind and soul never shall know, but there is no reason why they should not *seek* to know. Yet the very class who should be able to instruct the earnest and the investigating, is the class who have ever striven to keep them in dire ignorance, simply to maintain a superiority on their own side. The world was created in six days, that is what every child is told, and generally believes. The fact of eating an apple was the introduction of sin, and the curse of the human race. The God of Heaven fought in a personal, bloodthirsty manner with the armies of men, and gloried in the tortures of the very beings He had created. The waters of a mighty sea rolled back in order to annihilate a foe whose hearts

this same God expressly states *he* had purposely hardened. The sun stood still to please a Jewish priest, and give time for inordinate slaughter, and went back on a dial to establish the faith of a sick king. One inspired ruler writes his own death; and a perpetually quoted prophet speaks with a personal knowledge of events that cover a period of two hundred or three hundred years. Some books of prophecy are in fact the work of several writers, *not* of one. But the clergy, who are the professed students of the Bible, were the last to discover or acknowledge that. Heaven knows whom they were afraid of. Their own heads and chiefs most probably, who hold the prospects of advancement and the pomposity of office. Nothing must be altered, all must continue on the old safe cut-and-dry lines; no controversy, no discussion, no argument; blind belief and blinder submission; God, so it seems to me, being represented to men in *their* own image now, just as He was in the old ignorant days, when it is written, 'He talked, and walked, and fought, and commanded, and punished, and avenged.' He loved and hated; was jealous and angry, and to all intents and purposes was a being very like those who professed to have almost personal acquaintance with Him."

"If all you say is true," sighed Sheba miserably, "what *is* there to believe? It is hard to give up all faith in what one has learnt and accepted. In the light in which you look at the Bible and religion, nothing seems true or trustworthy."

"You could find plenty that is both," he said, "if you had waited to study it for yourself, not learnt to read it by man's literal interpretation. Hard—well, it is hard, and no doubt I seem to you as a devil tempting. That is why we will teach Paul nothing. He shall at least have no foolish fables clinging to memory, when he is old enough to choose for himself."

"I wish," said Sheba, "you knew Noel Hill. I wonder what he would say to your assertions."

"Bring him to me," said the old German with a gruff laugh. "I should like it. I have fought many a battle with priests of all persuasions. They always had to beat a retreat. Mostly they take shelter under the wing of faith. What can't be explained up to a certain point must be received in faith; the faith of a little child at his mother's knee who accepts 'Cerentola' and the 'Giant Killer' as real personages. Faith—Bah! Was there ever so heavy a stone rolled at the gate of inquiry? Faith! where would the world be now if science had only been content with faith? If Galileo had simply said, 'You must believe the earth goes round the sun because I—say so;' or Columbus, 'You must believe there is another continent, though I haven't found it;' or the discoverer of electric force, 'You must believe there is a mighty and wonderful current, which will bridge space and laugh at barriers of sea and land; which is light and heat, and life and death; but I can't show you its power, or its use.' The mind

of man is so constituted that it must be convinced of a thing before accepting it as truth ; but the mind of childhood is not so. Hence the reason why your clergy are so eager for the baptism of infants, the (to them) still more important rite of Confirmation, ere ever the young mind has really thought or considered the importance of what it professes. Once in the church, they say ‘All is safe with your future’ . . . . There are people who believe that the mere fact of a child being baptized means its salvation. I suppose it has never occurred to them to wonder what has become of the souls of the unbaptized millions who lived before the rite was instituted ; but *nun da hört alles auf !* a people who accept a service with the thirty-nine articles, the Athanasian creed, and the commination curses would accept anything ! *Wir lassen siebleiben !*”

Sheba was silent and disturbed ; for some moments they walked on without speaking. Presently they came in sight of little Paul ; he was standing still, looking at something which he held in his hand. It was a butterfly.

“Look, Sheba,” he cried, as the girl paused beside him—he had from the first decided that the surname of his governess was far too long for daily use—“I’ve found such a lovely butterfly !” He opened his hand. The insect lay there crushed and lifeless. His little face grew grave. “Oh !” he said sorrowfully, “where is it ? What has become of it ?”

“It is dead,” said Sheba, “it was cruel of you to crush the poor thing in your little hot hand.”

“Won’t it fly again ?” he asked eagerly. “Won’t it ever—ever fly again ? Is that why it’s dead ?”

“Yes,” said the girl gently.

“And where is what made it alive ?” he went on. “I haven’t got that, have I ? There is only a little dust in my hand.”

“That is so, *mein Liebling*,” said the old German, “you have solved the secret of all ended life : a little dust, no more, no less ; just—a little dust.”

The child let the dead insect fall from his hand. His eyes looked wistfully up to the two faces above him. “And then——” he said.

Sheba turned aside to hide the tears in her eyes. The old man looked troubled.

“Nay, ask no questions,” he said at last. “What matters when all is over ? Sleep, rest, or work that still goes on. We shall know soon enough.”

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

“WHAT LIFE MIGHT BE.”

IT is not to be supposed that such a mind and such teachings as those of Franz Müller could be without serious influence on such a nature as Sheba Ormatroyd's. She had been brought up to accept a narrow code of doctrine, restricted almost harshly from all inquiry or explanation, and until she knew Noel Hill the real truth or meaning of Christianity had been as much of a dead letter to her as it is, sad to say, to ninety-nine of every hundred children in Christian families. It is not their fault. What their parents were taught, they teach again, sect for sect, each upholding its own petty creed as superior to all others, and scarcely ever troubling to look below the surface of such pharisaical forms as family prayers and regular church-going. As for the clergy, what do they know, individually, of the souls that are their ostensible charge? What do they teach—or rather, what can they teach—beyond the stereotyped doctrines they, in their day, learned also from their parents' lips, and accepted in after life as infallible truth, to be disseminated and re-taught by themselves, with such additions or alterations as a little knowledge of Greek or Hebrew will permit? They preach of sowing the seed, but they seldom inquire what harvest their teaching has garnered. They visit their parish and discuss religious subjects, condescendingly or deferentially, according to the social state of the parishioners. They eat, drink, and are merry, and they keep a watchful eye on the loaves and fishes, yet all the while inveigh against the vanity of wordly pleasures, and the deceitfulness of riches. For a class of men who invariably marry rich wives, or wives with relatives possessed of interest in the matter of advowsons, this is somewhat inconsistent. They preach humility, yet who so bullies and works the poor curate as that same humility-preaching rector? They preach self-sacrifice, and point the moral by asking for large offertories for charities, to which they personally contribute prayers alone; or for church decoration and embellishment, which is a glorification of their own special edifice. “Deny yourself a few dinners, an extra carriage-horse, and provide altar cloths and put in a new painted window for *me*.” This in plain words is the meaning of delicately-worded suggestions as to doing God honour and proving the reality of Christian professions.

Oh, for a fan to purge, and a whirlwind to sweep away the monstrous accumulation of hypocrisy and false teaching that shames the very name of Christianity. Oh, for voice bold enough, and heart brave enough, to speak out the truth, and nothing but the truth, in high places as in low; in the palaces of the great, as in the cottages of the poor. Truth that should echo in the drawing-rooms

of society's pampered herds as bravely as from the pulpit, which forms so safe a vantage ground. Strip off my lady's satin and pearls, and my lord's robes of state ; the ball-room's dainty gossamer and fine broadcloth ; divest my lord cardinal of his scarlet robes, and my lord archbishop of his lawn and lace, and cry aloud : Be men and women of one earnest, zealous faith—the faith that speaks a common humanity—a living, seeking, struggling soul, that no trappings can disguise, and no luxury can satisfy. Unite, and solve into one common large-hearted brotherhood, that seeks for each and all, the best and the truest. Be no longer blind and deaf to all belief, save the narrow special creed which accident has made your own. Preach that love is the fulfilling of the law and *practise* it individually ; not in a selfish spasmodic fashion here and there, but as if it were a truism taken into *each* life however humble, or however great, and in each *faithfully* performed. Brief is the day of human life, and of the night that follows who shall speak with any certainty ? Who, whether saint, or prophet, or martyr, has come back to tell us of the Great Beyond ? To tell us with such absolute conviction that we can face death unflinchingly, saying : “ I know and am not afraid.”

Does any one pause in life's busy march, to ask themselves : “ Who am I ? Whence do I come ? Whither am I going ? I shall not always sleep and rise, eat and drink, dress and gossip, and slave for money, and weep over falsehood, and see the vanity of men's words, and of women's beauty, and the cruelty of death, and the sins and weariness of life ; not always—not perhaps for long, and then——”

Ah, *then*—that one little word holds all the wonder that nothing satisfies. Neither church-going, nor district-visiting, nor early celebrations, nor the voice of many preachers ; nay, sometimes not even the words of the Great Book itself, though in it there lies the grain of truth that men have heaped over with dust of doctrines, and well-nigh buried beneath mis-translations ; that has been used as a licence from Heaven for all the malignity and fiendish brutality of persecution ; that has served Jew and Gentile, priest and prophet, sceptic and saint, visionary and infidel, men of all creeds, and men of none ; that, I say, has served each and all of these in turn, so wide is the margin of its teaching, so varied the utility of its contents.

Then—chill as the touch of death's angel, weighty as the stone at the sepulchre, that little word bars the way to promised realms of bliss and vague dreams of celestial glory. Then—rise up and array yourselves, oh, misspent hours and wasted days ! oh, cold, hard words, that lie heavy as lead on many a loving heart, and chill many a tender memory. Petty actions ; deeds that seemed pious and unselfish, but which we know now to have been vain-glorious and full of foolish pride ! Rise up arrays of family quarrels, and cruel divisions ; bigoted faiths that in the name of

a God of mercy showed neither mercy nor toleration to any dissenting soul ; harsh mandates that drove the erring and the weak to ruin or to death. Rise up, too, oh, half-uttered truths, more cruel than any lies ; and you, oh sin best-loved of powers of evil and surest weapon in the fearful armoury of hell, the pride that apes humility. One and all your seeds are scattered, broadcast over an earth that was once as fair as we fain picture Heaven ; and one and all, you have your root in every life that lives, and rule with iron sceptre the blurred distorted image that once bore its Creator's stamp of perfection.

To one and all the truth comes soon or late ; are there few or many to whom it comes with a cry sad as the sigh from Calvary. "Ye might, but ye would not !" That is the secret of each heart ; there lies the chance of better things breathed into the folded bud of each new life, to blossom beneath the sun of purity, or perish beneath the chill frosts of evil. "Ye might, but ye would not." Who that looks back on even a score of human years, but hears those words ring out the knell of many a sad mistake, many a heartless deed. Such a little thing could have prevented the mistake ; would have altered the deed. Such a little thing. But it is too late now. The error has borne its fatal fruit, the cruel act has perchance rolled a gravestone of silence between sufferer and inflictor. For each comes but the unavailing plaint : "Ye might, and ye would not."

Life has its duties, and we may not shirk their obligations any more than we may recklessly cast aside that life itself, be it ever so burdensome.

Side by side with the days and the years march the opportunities of each for good or for evil. It is a solemn thought, but one too often lightly regarded. Science looks far into the future, it cannot stay to lift the beggar from his misery. Philosophy bends grey head and dim eyes over the labours of thought ; it hears not the cry for bread at its door. Religion speaks vaguely of beatitude in a future state, of patience under trial in this ; seldom does it go out of its priestly way to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, or protect the orphan. It seems, indeed, as if each art and profession lived but for itself and its own petty triumphs, while all the great ills of life and all its mistakes and necessities are left unheeded, as they always have been left, by the great majority. Is it any wonder that selfishness takes deeper root, and evil flourishes rank and poisonous in congenial soil, despite a feeble remonstrance here and there ? To our shame, be it said, despite also the advance of culture and religion. The problem of virtue lies at the root of all moral problems, and it concerns those who profess religious opinions just as much as those who do not. But "how to be virtuous ?" asks man of his teachers. What answer do they make ? The Church bids him love God, and live only for His service. Science and philosophy, worshipping their idol of "reason,"

say, “Virtue is the performance of such acts as shall benefit your fellow man.” Rationalism teaches that “virtue is the avoidance of such things as are harmful, individually or collectively,” so that a sin might be a virtue if the action of lying or stealing were beneficial, instead of the reverse. Virtue is unselfishness, says one creed, yet selfishness is in itself a law of individual life—the life that has to be fed, and clothed, and cared for, and whose needs are too imperative to be gainsayed. If we come to define conscious existence, we find selfishness its very essence ; it is only harmful when carried to excess, and made the rule of each thought and action that fills the petty sphere of individual life.

Virtue, again, presented as a scientific theory, is only attainable by rising out of that same petty sphere of individual life, and surveying the whole race of mankind as a brotherhood and treating it as such. Yet if science only allows to that vast brotherhood its short span of human life, there is more of melancholy than of hope in the prospect. It needs a wide faith and a deep hope to look beyond, and yet again beyond, and yet trust for the ultimate happiness of the erring souls that emanate from one source of universal life, and yet have lost all likeness to that source, and almost all kinship to that spirit.

Virtue, or that semblance of goodness which we call virtue, is relative to the whole of the great human body, but it often fails to take root in the heart even though it sways the intellect. To do both, it must represent God’s will to man’s conscience, and impress his spiritual as well as his material condition. Then the importance of earth’s “to-day” is no longer narrowed into mere material well-being, with nothing beyond but the grim gates of death.

It is of little use to preach virtue and never practise it, to warn and not assist, to entreat others to beware of offences, yet live a life pointing a very different moral, and causing either directly or indirectly those very offences to exist. It has been said, that if every man who draws the breath of life would only do a little good to each fellow creature with whom friendship or kinship unites him in a common band of associations, he would be also doing an inestimable good for the great mass of humanity, and conferring a far greater benefit on such humanity than it receives in the aggregate from some sacrifice or martyrdom that has been impulsive and irrational, even though it seems heroic. It doesn’t seem a hard thing to do a *little* good in each life ; something to help another life whose fellowship brightens the dull prose of existence ; but it is *each* life, not one here and there that must do it, ere the benefit is felt or the effect acknowledged.

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Some such thoughts as these ran riot in the mind of Sheba Ormatroyd for many days after that long discussion with Müller;

all was chaos and disorder in her soul ; one faith had slipped away and there was no other to take its place. She dimly felt what life might be, and what religion might make of it, but she knew that it was, in reality, widely different. The helplessness and hopelessness of it all saddened and embittered her; in no time of her life had she been in such terrible danger, and yet she was quite unconscious of the fact.

The old German himself never guessed what harm he had done ; with what a devastating blast his chill philosophies had blown over that untrained, yet fruitful mind-garden of the young girl for whom he had so kindly a friendship. She had asked, and he had answered. It did not occur to him to question results.

He had read so much, and studied so deeply, and thought so earnestly, that his mind was like a huge rough giant, towering over the feeble pygmies of most intellects with which he came in contact. To one who had made himself familiar from youth up with such works as those of Kant, Schopenhauer, Strauss, Ranke, Gervinus, Hegel, Mosheim ; the doctrines of Luther and Calvin ; the history of ancient and modern religions, with all their terrible array of dogmas, and their debasing cruelties and persecutions, it was no wonder that a child's faith in what he termed the “nursery stories of Christianity” seemed weak and foolish, and of no account.

Each mind has its own secret temple of worship, perhaps the old German philosopher had his, though he would not acknowledge it, and worshipped there at the shrine of reason, with complete satisfaction to himself. The name of Christianity signified nothing to him but a narrow, hard creed, whose professors were bitter foes to any variance of opinion, or any deep and persistent inquiry. He had heard wranglings innumerable over the Bible, and discussions on the Fall, the Atonement, the Incarnation and the Resurrection, till the very words had grown hateful and robbed of anything like sacred meaning. Priests were ready to fight tooth and nail over some petty formula that invested them with temporary importance, while on the threshold of the Church stood shivering souls hungering for some food that should satisfy, and some hope that should comfort.

Perhaps Müller had climbed so high that he looked down on all denominations as one and the same thing, and classed them together without troubling to search among the mass for any exception. His life had been a stormy one, and priesthood had ever been held up to him as a bugbear and a tyrant ; it had destroyed family peace, and thrust at him on all sides with the sharp sword of malignant persecution, and he at last had trampled it under foot with the scorn and pride of youth, crying aloud : “ Of you, and of your God I will have nothing.” His passionate love for music and his own splendid gifts had alone saved him from utter heartlessness and

hardness, and there was in him a certain nobility of character that made his friendship a gift worth bestowing, and showed that even hostility and injustice had not quite warped his mind.

And it was in this man's path that fate had chosen to throw Sheba Ormatroyd at the most critical period of her life.

(*To be continued.*)

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## CALDERON.

By JOSEPH FORSTER.

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SOME critics have compared Calderon to Shakespeare. The comparison is utterly preposterous. No two authors could differ more in method, substance and style. Shakespeare's men and women show us their inmost souls and hearts. Calderon's creations are scarcely men and women ; they are beings moved by one passion, as a machine might be moved by one spring. Calderon incarnates an idea and calls it a man or woman ; Shakespeare reduces and subordinates all to the individual mind and character of the person portrayed. In Calderon there is no gradual unfolding and development of character ; no striking out new phases of thought and passion by the shock of circumstances. There are in Calderon's plays the jealous and implacable husband, the ardent lover, the determined villain ; but they remain to the end of the fifth act exactly what they were in Scene I., Act 1. They all wear their hearts on their sleeves. They are distinctly lay figures, dressed and posed and made to articulate from the teeth words of love or hate ; but no thought animates their brains, no real blood circulates in their hearts. All the action is arranged by a consummate stage manager, but there is no character, no humour, no mixed passions, no awful and tremendous struggle between the good and bad angels in man and woman ; all is mechanical and proceeds from the head alone ; the heart has no part in it.

Most of Calderon's plays illustrate some proverb. For instance : "Life is a Dream ;" "In this Life all is True and all is False ;" "Beware of Still Water ;" "Jealousy the Worst of Monsters ;" "All is not so Bad as it Appears ;" "A House with Two Doors is Difficult to Guard."

Calderon was half a preacher and half a dramatist, and there was not enough of him to be great in both parts.

Then a Spaniard's religion had nothing to do with the conscience and the heart. No. It consisted, in Calderon's time, in slavish devotion to the Holy Inquisition and to the Catholic dogmas and ceremonies. Take to illustrate this important point the hero of the "Devotion to the Cross." Ennio boasts that :

Horrid crimes, theft, murder, sacrilege,  
Treason and perfidy—these are my boast  
And glory !

Then this truculent gentleman regales us with an account of some of the enormities he has committed, including the murder of an old hidalgo and the abduction of his daughter, stabbing another hidalgo and carrying off his wife. After these little escapades he sought refuge in a convent, and seduced a nun. This outrage on the Holy Catholic religion awakened his slumbering conscience, and taught him for the first time that he was a scoundrel. His soul is saved through his abject terror of the power of the offended Church. Conscience does not touch him.

In another piece, by Tirso de Molena, a hermit whose life has been most virtuous has been the victim of religious doubt. This damns him. His soul is sunk into the abyss, while a bandit, who perishes on the scaffold for hideous crimes, dies penitent and is saved!

Spain at that time was not distinguished by lofty morality.

Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca was born at Madrid at the commencement of the year 1600. He was baptized on the 14th February, 1600. His family, on both sides, were of noble blood. When nine years of age he was placed in the Royal College at Madrid, under the care of the Jesuits. He soon surpassed all his fellow-students. The fame of Lope de Vega was then at its height, and aroused the emulation of the boy. His first comedy, fortunately lost, was written before he was fourteen.

Calderon afterwards studied at the celebrated university of Salamanca, where he soon became the pride of the college. The drama still fascinated him, and before leaving Salamanca he enjoyed the delight of seeing some of his plays acted. He returned to Madrid, and learned there, from the plays of Lope de Vega, the art of constructing a complicated plot of intrigue.

At the age of twenty-five he joined the army, and went to Flanders and Milan. During these ten years of travel and adventure he collected materials for his future works.

In 1636 Calderon returned to Madrid, at the command of Philip IV., who made him superintendent of the dramatic festivities of the court. Lope de Vega had then been dead one year. Four years afterwards the Chevaliers of the Four Orders were ordered to join the army in Catalonia. The king, who wanted a comedy, intimated to Calderon that he would accept a comedy as a substitute for his military services. The poet preferred to write and fight; he dashed off a play and then joined the army.

At the conclusion of the campaign he returned to court, and was received with much favour. In 1651 Calderon took religious orders, but did not relinquish the theatre. In 1663 he joined the congregation of St. Peter, composed exclusively of priests born at Madrid, and was soon elevated to the post of chaplain of the congregation. He died at the age of 81, on the 26th May, 1681.

Although for fertility Calderon could not compare with Lope de Vega, he left the world one hundred and twenty comedias of three

acts each, one hundred auto-sacramentales, two hundred loas (a kind of prologue), one hundred interludes, besides an indefinite number of poems, songs and romances.

"The Physician of His Own Honor" is one of the most remarkable and characteristic of Calderon's tragic plays. I will therefore introduce a sketch of it. It is intense, gloomy, and the situations are arranged with great art.

Don Enrique, the prince, is thrown from his horse and remains insensible. The king exhibits a cool indifference to his brother's fate, and leaves him. The injured Enrique is carried into the castle of Don Gutierre, when Doña Mencia comes to attend him. To her horror she recognizes the prince who had formerly made love to her, and whom she still loves. The prince does not know that she is the wife of Don Gutierre. When he recovers consciousness he recognizes Doña Mencia, and a stilted love scene occurs. The prince, on learning that the lady is married, exclaims :

Troy burns ; and the *Aeneas* of my heart  
Must from the flames be rescued.

The lady rises to the occasion and does justice to her chaste reserve in the following language :

It was a mountain of snow conquered by the flowers,  
Squadrons armed by time.

The husband, Don Gutierre, enters to pay his respects to the prince. The latter calls for his horse. Don Gutierre urges him to stay, but he protests that he is anxious to reach Seville. He tells Gutierre that a friend had betrayed him, by assisting another to gain the heart of the woman he loved.

Doña Mencia then humbly suggests that the prince should not condemn his friend unheard ; that perhaps all could be satisfactorily explained. He says he will profit by her advice, and leaves them.

Gutierre then asks his wife's permission to go to Seville to see the king. Mencia affects to be jealous of a certain Leonora, but finally gives her permission. After his departure Mencia tells her maid that she was forced into her marriage with Don Gutierre, and that the prince loves her more than ever, but that she relies on her sense of honour.

In the next scene Leonora begs for justice of the king against Don Gutierre, who refused to marry her according to promise.

Don Gutierre arrives, and is questioned by the king. He answers that he would have married the lady, but had seen a man descending from her balcony, and for that reason refused. Then Don Arias avows that he descended from the balcony after visiting another lady residing in the same house. This gentleman also offers to defend Leonora's honour with his sword.

Don Gutierre attempts to draw. The king, indignant, orders the arrest of both.

In the second act, Prince Enrique gains admission to the house of Doña Mencia, whose husband is under arrest.

The lovers are together when the husband, who has been released on parole, arrives to surprise them. The prince is hidden in her bedroom. Gutierrez is prodigal with his expressions of love. Mencia talks with him calmly, and leaves him to see about his supper. She soon returns with every mark of terror in her face and voice, and tells Gutierrez that a man is concealed in her chamber. The furious husband draws his sword; Doña Mencia snatches up a light and offers to conduct him, but she pretends to stumble, and drops the light, which is extinguished. In the darkness and confusion the prince escapes. Gutierrez enters Doña Mencia's room to search for the intruder. He returns with the prince's dagger, which he found there, under his cloak. His suspicions are vague, and he is silent on them. He tells his wife that her fears were baseless; no man could have been there. His manner is grim, but very polite. He bids her farewell, and on opening his cloak to embrace her, she discovers Enrique's dagger pointed at her. She shrieks and exclaims:

MENCIA. Hold, senor! Your dagger pointed at me! I have never wronged you! I—

DON GUTIERRE. What troubles my beloved wife?

MENCIA. Why—ah! seeing you thus I fancied myself already bathed in my own blood. That dagger . . .

DON GUT. When seeking your imaginary intruder I drew my dagger to punish him.

MENCIA. I have never wronged you.

DON GUT. Sweet wife, your defence is most superfluous.

MENCIA. Ah! it is when you are absent from me that my sadness so confuses my brain as to make fears out of shadows.

DON GUT. Courage! . . . If it is possible, I will come to-morrow night. Till then, God bless you.

MENCIA. God bless you! (*Exit.*)

DON GUT. (*alone.*) Oh, Honor! you and I have a fearful account to settle when alone!

Gutierrez is set at liberty. He sees the prince again, and notices that his sword resembles the dagger he found in his wife's chamber. This arouses his suspicions, which he resolves to clear up. The next scene is at Don Gutierrez's. Doña Mencia is sleeping in a chair. Don Gutierrez arrives. He is delighted at finding her alone and asleep. Yet, on deeper thought, she being alone in her chamber, may be waiting for some one for whom her maid is perhaps on the watch. He extinguishes the light and awakens her. The following dialogue takes place in whispers:

MENCIA. O, God! what is this?

GUTIERRE. Hush, speak softly.

MENCIA. Who art thou?

GUTIERRE. Knowest thou me not?

MENCIA. Ah, yes! There is but one who dares to be so bold.

GUTIERRE (*aside.*) She recognizes me. (*ALOUD*) Mencia, wonder not that love should be so bold.

MENCIA. Love will not pardon the crime your highness now commits.  
 GUTIERRE (aside). Your highness! Then she knows me not! She speaks  
 not to me! O God! what have I heard! What a chaos of fresh doubts!  
 O misery! O heavy day!

MENCIA. Wilt thou second time thus risk my life? Think'st thou  
 that every night?

GUTIERRE (aside). O death!

MENCIA. That every night thou canst hide here?

GUTIERRE (aside). O Heavens!

MENCIA. That every night the light can be extinguished?

GUTIERRE (aside). Extinguish life!

MENCIA. And thou escape Don Gutierre?

GUTIERRE. O heavy day!

The vengeance of Don Gutierre is dark, silent and deadly. He accumulates fresh proofs of the prince's identity, and intercepts a letter to his wife, which convinces him that although she has been faithful to him in deed, her heart is Don Enrique's. He detects her writing a letter, and snatches it from her. She faints, and on recovering finds the following letter from her husband :

Love adores thee, but Honour condemns thee; the one dooms thee to death, the other warns thee of it. Thou hast only two hours to live. Thou art a Christian; save thy soul: as for thy life, thou canst not save it.

Her terror, on receiving this, is extreme. She exclaims :

Jacinta! O God, what is this? . . . No one replies. . . . My horror increases. . . . The servants are absent. . . . The doors all fastened! O God, I am alone! alone! . . . The windows barred . . . the doors bolted . . . no escape. . . . Death in all its horrors approaches me. . . .

She flies from her chamber. Don Gutierre returns with a surgeon, whom he has forced to accompany him with eyes bandaged.

*Don Gutierre to the Surgeon.*

You must enter that chamber. This dagger pierces your heart if you do not faithfully obey all my commands. Open that door, and say what you see there?

SURGEON. An image of death; a corpse stretched on a bed. Two torches burn at each side, and a crucifix is placed before it. I know not who it may be, as a veil covers the countenance.

GUTIERRE. Tis well.

This living corpse you must put to death.

SURGEON. What are your terrible commands?

GUTIERRE. That you bleed her to death. That you quit her not until she expires. No word! It is useless to implore my pity. It is dead!

The surgeon obeys; but on leaving the house blindfolded, he marks the door with his finger, red with blood, to enable him to know the house again. He informs the king of all, who accompanies him to Gutierre's, and orders Don Gutierre to marry Leonora.

KING. Give then thy hand to Leonora; well she merits it.

GUTIERRE. I give it freely, if Leonora dare accept it bathed in blood.

LEONORA. I marvel not, nor fear.

**GUTIERRE.** 'Tis well, but I  
Have been my honor's own physician, nor  
Have yet forgot the science.

**LEONORA.** Keep it then  
To end my life, if it be bad.

**GUTIERRE.** Alone on this condition I now yield my hand.

Evidently Gutierre is looked upon as a hero by the author and the audience. I may, perhaps, be allowed to express a hope that Leonora behaved nicely.

The next play of Calderon's about which I will say a few words is the "Wonderful Magician," which has been compared to Goethe's "Faust." The scene of the piece opens near Antioch, where, "with glorious festival and song" a temple is being consecrated to Jupiter. Cyprian, a young student, has withdrawn from the noise of the town to devote himself to quiet study. A slight noise disturbs him, and the Daemon appears, dressed as a cavalier. They commence to argue: Cyprian points out the errors of polytheism, the Daemon opposing him. We learn that Cyprian has been converted to monotheism, a step in the direction of Christianity; and this conversion is feebly combated by the Daemon.

Cyprian is left alone in his study, but is soon interrupted by the quarrel of his two friends, Lelio and Floro, who are both in love with Justina, a recent convert to Christianity. Cyprian makes peace, and agrees to visit the lady in order to learn whom she prefers. On seeing Justina, Cyprian loves her. She rejects his love as she had that of Lelio and Floro. This coldness so enrages him that he exclaims :

So beautiful she was—and I,  
Between my love and jealousy,  
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,  
Unworthy as it may appear—  
So bitter is the life I live  
That, hear me, Hell!  
I now would give  
To thy most detested spirit  
My soul for ever to inherit,  
To suffer punishment and pine  
So this woman may be mine.  
Hear'st thou, Hell!

Dost thou reject it. My soul is offered.

**DAEMON (unseen)** I accept it.

*Tempest, with thunder and lightning. The storm rages—a ship goes down at sea; and the Daemon enters as a shipwrecked passenger.*

**DAEMON (aside)** It was essential to my purposes  
To make a tumult on the sapphire ocean,  
That in this unknown form  
I might at length  
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture  
I sustained upon the mountain, and assail  
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,  
Forging the instruments of his destruction  
Even from his love and from his wisdom.

Cyprian condoles with the stranger and offers him hospitality.

Cyprian describes, in very flowery language, the charms of Justina, and declares that he is so enamoured of her as to have forsaken philosophy, and to be ready to give up his soul for her possession. The Dæmon accepts the offer, splits open a rock, and shows Justina reclining and asleep. Cyprian rushes towards her, but the rock closes again, and the Dæmon demands that the contract shall be signed with Cyprian's blood. This is done, and the Dæmon agrees to instruct him in magic, by which, at the end of a year, he will be able to possess Justina.

After the year's probation is passed, Cyprian is eager for his reward. The Dæmon calls on the spirits of hell to call up impure thoughts in Justina's mind, so that she may incline her ear to Cyprian.

The following scene shows the agitation of the tempted girl. She is alone in her chamber :

JUSTINA. Thou, melancholy ! which in me  
 Fluttering risest, sad and sweet,  
 When surrender'd I to thee,—  
 Cease my languid heart to treat  
 With such hateful tyranny !  
 Tell me, what tumultuous power  
 Wildly doth my being move—  
 Kindling, lulling more and more ?  
 And this glow that thrills my heart ?  
 Say, what causest now the smart  
 Of this anguish ?  
 CHORUS. Love—O, Love !  
 JUSTINA. 'Tis yon love-lorn nightingale  
 That gives me the reply,  
 Telling over his soft tale  
 To the listeners in the vale,  
 Of passion and of constancy ;  
 Mourning still his gentle heat  
 In melody—Ah, me, how sweet,  
 Whilst his mate, who, rapt and fond,  
 Listening sits a bough beyond,  
 Makes divine respondence meet.  
 Cease, O cease, sweet Philomel !  
 That not by so deep a charm  
 Thoughts within my soul may swell,  
 Of what a manly heart would tell !  
 No, it was yon vine-tree's song  
 That, still longing, seeks and flies,  
 Till it doth, the flowers among,  
 All the grass beloved throng,  
 And the green trunk vanquish'd lies.  
 Vine, no more with green embraces  
 Make me think on what thou lovest ;  
 For thy tendril interlaces  
 But to teach, I fear, thou sophist !  
 Arms will twine too, nor dissever ;  
 And, if not the tender vine  
 That still tries with fond endeavour  
 With the elm to intertwine,  
 'Tis yon bright sunflower that, ever  
 Charmed by the sun's decline,  
 Wanders after every glimmer  
 Of his countenance divine.

Sun-enamoured flow'r! obscure  
 From mine eyes those beams that bend it;  
 Dost thou, insatiate, lure,  
 Cheek to cheek, thy paramour?  
 Ever-moving, light-enchanted;  
 Hide, O flower, the amorous glowing  
 Of thy beauty,—tranquil foe!  
 To my treacherous heart avowing,  
 If such tears from leaves are flowing,  
 How from eyes thy tears would flow!  
 Loose, O vine, thy wreathed bower!  
 Silence, songster of the grove!  
 Rest, thou light, inconstant flower!  
 Or tell me the poisonous power  
 Of your magic.

CHORUS. Love—O, Love!  
 JUSTINA. Love! Ah! when did I respect it?  
 Or, thou false one! homage plan?  
 Ever have I not neglected,  
 With disdain and scorn rejected

Lelius, Florus, Cyprian?

(Pauses at the name of Cyprian and seems troubled.)

Lelio did not I disband,  
 And refuse young Florus' hand?  
 Cyprian treated with such scorn,  
 That, despairing and forlorn,  
 He for ever disappears?  
 But alas! I deem that now  
 Is the occasion for these tears:  
 Venture boldly to avow  
 What inspires me with those fears,  
 Since to mine own soul apart  
 I pronounced that, in that hour,  
 Cyprian did for ever part,—  
 Feel I (woe is me!) a power  
 Raging in my burning heart.  
 Ah, it must be pity when  
 Such a man, so high renowned,  
 By the whole world's voices crown'd,  
 Noblest of all noblemen,  
 From my heartless scorn hath drowned  
 In oblivion his great mind.  
 But, we're in compassion blind,  
 I the like had felt towards  
 Lelius' or young Florus' mind,  
 Since in bonds both are confined,  
 For my sake, by tyrant guards.  
 Then, ye wandering fancies, cease!  
 Enough, without this subtlety,  
 'Tis that pity to increase,  
 Nor my soul to love compel;  
 For I know not, woe is me!  
 Where to find him now, should I  
 Through the wide world to him fly.

(THE DEMON enters.)

DEMON. Come, oh come, and I will tell!  
 JUSTINA. What art thou, who thus athwart  
 This my chamber find'st the way,  
 When no bars asunder part?  
 Say if you a phantom art,  
 Formed by terror and dismay?  
 DEMON. No; but one called by the thought  
 That now rules, with tyrant sway,  
 O'er thy fluttering heart—a man

Whom compassion hither brought,  
That he might point out the way  
Whither fled thy Cyprian.  
 JUSTINA. And thou shalt fail.  
 This storm which afflicts my frenzied soul  
May imagination form  
To its own wish; but ne'er shall warm  
Reason to its mad control.  
 DÆMON. If thou hast the thought permitted,  
Half the sin is almost done!  
 Wilt thou, since 'tis half committed,  
Linger ere the joy be won?  
 JUSTINA. In our power abides not thought  
(Thought, alas! how vain to fly),  
 But the deed is, and 'tis one  
That we sin in mind have sought,  
 And another to have done:  
 I'll not move my foot to try.  
 DÆMON. If a mortal power assail  
Justina with all its might,  
Say, will not the victory fail  
When thy wish will not avail,  
But inclines thee in despite?  
 JUSTINA. By opposing to thee now  
My free will and liberty.  
 DÆMON. To my power they soon shall bow.  
 Come, 'tis bliss that thou wilt prove.  
 JUSTINA. Dearly would I gain it so.  
 DÆMON. It is peace, and calm, and love.  
*(Draws, but cannot move her.)*  
 JUSTINA. It is misery, death, despair!  
 DÆMON. Heavenly joy I offer thee.  
 JUSTINA. 'Tis bitter woe!  
 DÆMON. Lost and shamed, forsaken one!  
 Who in thy defence shall dare?  
 JUSTINA. My defence is God alone.  
 DÆMON. Virgin, virgin, thou hast won!

As the foiled Dæmon is unable to give Cyprian the real Justina, he deceives him by giving him a false one.

A figure, wrapped in a cloak, appears, and beckons to Cyprian to follow. He enters on the scene with, he believes, the beloved Justina in his arms. Transported with joy, he removes the veil from her face, and discovers a skull; from this hideous object proceeds these words:

Such are the glories of this world.

Cyprian, mad with disappointment, calls upon the Dæmon to fulfil his promise. He confesses that he cannot force Justina, as she is under the protection of a superior power! Cyprian asks what this power is. The Dæmon at last admits that it is the God of the Christians. Cyprian avows his belief in that power. The Dæmon is furious, and demands Cyprian's soul. He contends that the Dæmon has not fulfilled his contract. Words run high: Cyprian draws his sword and stabs the Dæmon; of course with no effect. Then the Dæmon tries to drag him away; but Cyprian, like Justina, calls on God for help, and the baffled Dæmon flies.

The Dæmon has a very bad time of it in this play. Cyprian and Justina are burned as heretics at Antioch, martyrs to the Christian faith.

The play closes with the last appearance of the unfortunate Dæmon riding through the air on a fiery serpent. He addresses the spectators, and tells them that God has compelled him to declare the innocence of Justina, and the freedom of Cyprian from his rash engagement: both now repose in Heaven. We must admit that the Dæmon is not amusing; but let us hope, with Burns, that there is hope of his amendment, especially as he has found his wickedness such a miserable failure.

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## PRINCESS DORMANOFF.

BY JOSEPHINE ERROL,

AUTHOR OF "NINE MERRY MAIDENS," "BRANDON'S ENGAGEMENT," "THINE ALONE."

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### CHAPTER I.

**A**S Gilbert Lovelace sat at breakfast one chill February morning, trifling with a *foie gras* and sipping his chocolate, he took up his mother's letter again, and perused it slowly. It did not contain much news; only urged him to come and see her and his father as soon as he possibly could; inquired if he had yet heard to which embassy he was likely to be attached; and concluded by telling him that the quaint Valley House, the nearest residence to their own, being only a mile distant, was let at last to a Russian princess, some of whose people had already arrived, and were engaged in beautifying and décorating it for her occupation.

"Wonder who she is?" he murmured. "Russian is only another name for Nihilist, and Europe is pretty well honeycombed with secret societies. Perhaps she is an emissary from one of them, bent upon a mission that will bring terrorism and assassination into our quiet corner of England." And then he laughed at his own fancies; for what should take a woman of that type to quiet Derlock, a remote village, little more than a hamlet, in South Devon, with the cottages sprinkled here and there in the valley and on the hill-sides sparsely, like plums in a schoolboy's pudding, and boasting only three gentlemen's residences?

So, dismissing the subject from his mind, he took up a morning paper and was soon deep in politics, and had forgotten all about the Russian princess and her old house in the Devonshire valley by the time he strolled out to his club.

A fortnight later, in response to a summons from his father, he was speeding in a hansom to Paddington, *en route* for Derlock, and arrived at the station with very little time to spare; for when his portmanteau was stored up aloft on the rack, his bear-rug adjusted over his knees, and half-a-dozen papers strewn on the seat beside him, there was just one minute to the starting-time. He had the compartment to himself, and was congratulating himself on that fact, when just as the guard signalled the engine-driver that all was right, the door of the carriage was thrown open, and a lady entered quickly, yet not hurriedly, and with a grace of movement that nothing it seemed would disturb or destroy, and

after her leapt a huge black-and-grey hound, while the door was slammed by a dark, strange-looking man, of whom Lovelace caught only a fleeting glimpse, for the next moment the train glided out of the station, and they were launched on their journey southwards.

He naturally glanced with some curiosity at his companion. She had seated herself in the far corner of the carriage, the dog sitting up gravely beside her, and when he looked, was in the act of picking up a splendid rug, composed of some rare birds' feathers on cloth, to wrap around her, though from her ankles to her dimpled chin she was wrapped in fur, and a small fur cap rested on her jet-black hair somewhat jauntily.

She caught him in the act of looking at her, and leaning forward, said in a singularly clear, sweet tone, though with a decided foreign accent: "I hope you do not object to my dog being in the carriage."

"Not at all," Lovelace assured her eagerly. "I am very fond of dogs myself, often travelling with a brace of spaniels."

"Ah, but Ivan is such a great fellow," stroking his massive head with her daintily gloved hand, "he takes up so much room. There was no time, however, to put him elsewhere, and even had there been, I should be loth to part with him even for a time." And she drew the fierce-looking head down to her shoulder and caressed it tenderly.

"I should think so," rejoined the young man. "One is never quite sure of finding one's dog safe in the box at the end of the journey, and I can well understand your prizing such a splendid animal. I have never seen one like him. What is he?"

"A Russian wolf-hound."

"I have seen some dogs in this country said to be of that breed, but they were neither so large nor so handsome."

"No. Ivan comes of a race that my people have prided themselves on for over a hundred years. A finer specimen could not be found if Russia were searched from Varungar to the Caucasus."

"I can quite believe it. Is he friendly to strangers?" inquired the young man, drawing nearer.

"Yes; if I tell him to be so." And murmuring a few words in some outlandish tongue, she made the great beast stretch out his paw and lay it in Gilbert's hand.

"How do you do?" laughed Lovelace, shaking the huge paw. "Glad to make your acquaintance, for you are a splendid fellow. But I don't think you return the compliment." And indeed the dog was looking from him to his mistress with a glance of almost human intelligence, as though asking if it were her pleasure that he should sit there and allow a stranger to take liberties with him, or whether he should fly at him, as he had often done at the great grey wolves in his own country, and rend and tear and destroy?

"Ivan," she began, again whispering in his ear those strange words, that were guttural when uttered even by her clear voice, and smiling ; and Gilbert thought she was just the loveliest creature he had ever seen when that smile broke like sunlight over her face.

She was a regally beautiful woman ; tall, and as far as he could judge, finely made, her head well set on her throat, her shoulders sloping and graceful. Her skin was pale and clear, and wonderfully fair for a dark woman—for of course he decided in his own mind that she was dark, having black hair, and straight black brows and thick jetty lashes that shaded the loveliest pair of blue eyes he had ever seen ; blue as deep as his own, which he inherited from his Irish mother, the rare Celtic orbs that are always so beautiful. Her features were straight, the whole type of her face aristocratic, and the dimple in her chin made the observer forget that it was a trifle too determined and prominent and indicative of an indomitable will that nothing could break or destroy.

"It is a long journey into this Devonshire," remarked the lady, when the short winter's day was rapidly merging into night, as she drew her furs closer round her and glanced out at the snow-covered country, with a little involuntary shiver.

"Devonshire," he repeated. "Are you going there ?"

"Yes."

"Then you have three hours' more travelling before you," exclaimed Lovelace, delighted at the prospect of being in her society for that time.

"Indeed ! Do you know this route well ?" she asked, playing with the dog's ears.

"Yes; very well. My father's place is at Derlock."

"Really ! Then we shall be neighbours," she said, suddenly lifting her beautiful eyes and giving him a long glance.

"Neighbours ! How ? Why ?" he inquired eagerly.

"I have taken a house near there."

"Is it possible ? Can it be you that have taken the Valley House ?"

"I believe that is its name," she rejoined indifferently ; "but I know very little about it. Paulo has managed all matters as usual for me."

"You will find it rather dull," he remarked after a pause, marvelling what could take a woman of the brilliant type of his companion to such a remote, quiet little place as Derlock. "There is only one other decent house in the place, besides my father's and yours."

"And to whom does that belong ?"

"To Doctor Wilford."

"Ah ! Is he married ?"

"No ; single. His two sisters keep house for him."

"And are they young and pleasant ?"

"Ella is just eighteen, rather pretty in a countrified style. Miss Wilford is over thirty, and is—ah! well, in fact a ——"

"Sort of dragon," put in the Russian archly, with a smile sweet enough to disarm even that monster.

"She is decidedly acidulated," laughed Lovelace.

"Then I shall avoid the doctor's house," remarked the lady.

"You won't have much difficulty in doing that," replied the young man, "as it is two miles from yours. The Manor—that is my father's place, you know—is a mile distant, lying between the two others, and if you want any more society, other than that of the country-folk, you will have to go ten miles to get it."

"How delightful!" she exclaimed with animation. "I shall enjoy the change and thorough quiet."

"Don't you think it may pall and grow monotonous after a time?"

"I think not. And you see, I must keep quiet and nurse myself through this winter."

"Why?" he inquired anxiously, scanning the beautiful face that showed every sign of perfect and splendid health.

"My lungs are weak," touching her breast; "the rigours of Russian winters have tried them terribly, and my physician recommends my passing the rest of the winter in South Devon."

"I see," he rejoined.

"Is it really warm there?"

"Yes, and Derlock is a sheltered cosy little spot."

"I am so glad you speak well of it," she remarked, as though much pleased. "Of course you know it so well. I suppose you have spent all your life there?"

He did not notice how eagerly and keenly the beautiful eyes searched his face as she asked the question.

"Not more than half. Before my father became an invalid we had a house in town, where we used to spend a portion of every year. Then I went to Eton and afterwards to Oxford, and have had chambers in Piccadilly for the last year," he explained, and then gradually she drew him on to tell her everything about his life and prospects.

The time passed so rapidly and pleasantly that he was astonished when the train slackened speed to hear the porters calling out the name of the station at which they had to alight for Derlock.

"You haven't told me your name?" she said with one of her brilliant smiles, as she rose and tossed aside the feather rug.

"Gilbert Lovelace; and yours? May I not know it?"

"I am Petrovna Dormanoff," she replied, giving him her hand to assist her from the carriage.

An elderly woman hurried down the platform to her as she alighted, and two menservants appeared, and when the luggage had been collected, Gilbert escorted her to the carriage that was waiting, and stood bareheaded while she drove off, after bestowing

on him a winning smile and a wave of the hand. Then he mounted into the sober dog-cart sent for him, and taking the reins from the groom, let the grey have her head, and rattled away towards his home.

## CHAPTER II.

DERLOCK MANOR HOUSE was a fine old red-brick building, of the Tudor fashion, many-windowed, turreted, with towers east and west, and had a commanding central porch, over which stood a clock tower. Round three sides of the house ran a broad marble terrace, with low open wall, and beyond lay the garden and park-like grounds and the great tree-covered hills.

It had been in the possession of the Lovelaces since the time of Elizabeth, and they were naturally proud of their old ancestral home and their stainless pedigree. Gilbert's father had been in the House of Commons, and gave promise of becoming a fine orator and a light in the political world, but ill-health cut short his career, and obliged him to retire to the seclusion and quiet of his lovely Devonshire home. Then it was that he turned his thoughts exclusively to the future of his only child, striving his hardest to instil his own ideas and ambitions into the young mind.

However, he found the task a difficult one, for Gilbert's tastes were not similar to his father's. He did not care for politics, had no wish to shine in the House, and would have preferred living the simple life of a country gentleman, passing his time in shooting, fishing, and hunting; still, he yielded to his father's wishes, went to Oxford, took an expensive suite of rooms in town, and waited till he should receive orders to proceed to some embassy abroad.

The young man chafed somewhat at being kept in London, hanging about doing little or nothing, and responded eagerly to his father's summons, thinking he would have some definite news to tell him, but he was only mysteriously reticent; told him something good was in store if he would only wait patiently, and that he might as well remain at the Manor for the present.

This he was nothing loath to do, for he was consumed with a burning desire to once more see the Russian princess. He had hinted a desire to call, but was met with a laughing refusal, and told her only chaperon was an old Polish woman, her foster nurse; so he had to trust to chance, and took to long walks through the valleys, and rides from east to west and north to south about Derlock and its vicinity. But for a fortnight he only saw her once, and then she was driving a pair of roans, and flashed by swiftly, he just catching a bewildering glimpse of her beautiful face, wreathed in smiles of recognition. A week later he met her on the beach at Mordoe, a tiny hamlet, some two or three miles further down the valley; met her walking alone, save for Ivan, who stalked majestically behind her.

"Ah, Mr. Lovelace, this is a pleasure," she exclaimed, as if delighted; her eyes shining, her lips smiling, as she stretched out her hand.

"The pleasure is mutual, princess," replied the young man, grasping her fingers warmly. "I thought we never should meet again."

"Ah, that was hardly possible."

"Would you permit me to call on you?" he asked.

"Better—not," she returned hesitatingly, a blush tinging the pure pallor of her cheeks. "When a woman is alone, as I am, she has to be so careful, or she becomes an object for pitiless tongues to canvass and traduce."

"There are so few people about here to criticize what you do."

"There is the doctor and his family," watching him closely through her thick lashes.

"Psha! Mere country bumpkins. You need not care what people of that sort think or say."

"Then—they have been talking of me?" she said, looking straight at him.

"Princess, what makes you think so?" he replied in some confusion.

"You have been there, have you not?" laying her hand gently on his arm, at which an electric shock seemed to run through him.

"Yes, I have been there," he acknowledged somewhat huskily.

"And they talked of me?"

"Yes."

"What did they say?"

"Oh, nothing."

"I know what that means. They abused me without limit and without reason, and ——"

"I should not allow any one to abuse you when I was present," he said decidedly, looking at her with admiring eyes.

"Ah, have I a partisan, a friend in you?" she asked softly.

"Yes, if you will permit me that privilege?" he returned eagerly.

"It would be a great happiness to me to have a friend, and yet —and yet ——"

"Yet what?"

"Friendship between man and woman seldom answers one's hopes and expectations. One must always suffer and perchance weep."

"I am quite willing to run that risk," he cried.

"Then be my friend," she responded gently, putting her hand in his.

"Thanks," he murmured, as he pressed it tenderly, almost overcome by the flattering condescension of this regal and beautiful woman who exercised such a strange fascination over him.

"Now, tell me what you have been doing?" she said, as they

paced slowly side by side along the pebbly beach, watching the great white-crested waves rush in with a dash, leaving a fringe of frothy foam on the strand, and the gulls riding on their crests, and the sand-pipers flitting and swooping by. "Since we last met many things must have happened."

"Nothing of moment," he replied. "This is a quiet, humdrum spot, and is never convulsed nor wakened up by any fearful tragedy or startling event."

"I can believe that," she agreed, her haughty mouth curving into a little sneer; "but have you no news from other parts?"

"None. Absolutely none."

"Nothing fresh about the diplomatic career you told me you would soon be launched on?"

"Nothing at present."

"Still you may hear any day that you are attached to some embassy," she continued, with curious insistence.

"Of course," he assented. "Every morning as I see father perusing the pile of letters on his plate, I expect to hear that I am to set off at once for Kamtschatka, Nova Scotia, or some such horrible hole."

"I hope you won't go quite so far," observed the princess, with one of those brilliant smiles that lit up and softened her haughty face so wonderfully.

"I hope so too."

"You don't seem to like the idea of going abroad much," she went on, watching him furtively as usual through the shelter of her lashes.

"No, I would much rather stay here," he replied pointedly, and she turned away her head as though to hide a blush, but in reality her face grew paler and an angry light gleamed in her eyes. However, the next moment she recovered herself, and went on chatting graciously.

"You are young, you have your life and the world before you. Who knows? Some day you may be a great man, and famous."

"I think not," he replied, with a light laugh. "I believe I am a thorough fool in all things diplomatic, and should get on much better as a country squire than as prime minister."

"You do not over-value your mental qualities."

"It would be difficult to do that," he admitted frankly, "for I know I have little or no talent for diplomacy and *finesse*."

"Talent, and taste for it, may come with practice."

"I hardly think so. I am sure, princess, you could surpass me in that way easily."

"Do you think so?" she queried, a strange eagerness in her tones.

"I am sure of it. I should not like to cross swords with you in that way."

"Really! Now do you know that I do not care for very clever

men? They seem to eclipse and overshadow we poor women. I like rather stupid ones."

"Then you ought to like me, princess," declared the young man boldly, and his companion laughed, though across her face swept a look of mingled anger and surprise.

However, Gilbert did not notice it, and they went on talking, and before they parted, in the gathering gloom of the winter's afternoon, he had obtained permission to call at the Valley House the next evening.

### CHAPTER III.

HE never quite knew how he passed the early hours of the following day.

The hours seemed to drag along leaden-footed. He was restless, feverish, excited, and scarcely ate three mouthfuls of food at dinner, a proceeding which awakened his fond mother's maternal fears, and inquiries as to the cause of this want of appetite. Gilbert, however, parried her queries, and preserved a discreet silence anent Princess Dormanoff; for he was well aware his mother entertained a holy horror of all foreigners, looking upon them with suspicious eyes. At last, when dinner was over, and the invalid had retired to his room for the night, and Mrs. Lovelace had settled down comfortably to a game of cribbage with her companion, he was free, and throwing a coat over his dress suit and catching up a hat, he sped off at a great rate down the road leading to the Valley House. He was not long in traversing that mile, and his eager gaze scanned the place that held his divinity.

The garden was neglected, and showed that little or no effort had been made to put it straight. Within all was different, and signs of elegance and luxuriance met his gaze on every side as he followed the tall footman who ushered him into the drawing-room. It was vacant, and he had time to glance about it.

It was rich in ornaments and *bric-à-brac*. There were bronzes from Szafnagal, china from Odessa, marble from Finland, bearskins from the Arctic Seas, queer figures made in the forests of the north, and furs without end strewn over the floor and on the satin couches. He sank on to a couch and felt there were worse things on a chilly evening than lying back luxuriously on a bearskin; but just as he sank back he became conscious that a tall, black-robed figure was being reflected in the long mirrors that lined the walls from ceiling to floor, and starting up he saw the princess coming slowly towards him.

She wore a long trailing robe of dead-black silk, profusely trimmed with jet, which left her arms and throat bare, save for the strings of pearls twisted round them, and that were not whiter than the skin against which they rested. If she had appeared

beautiful before, how much more so did she now to the infatuated young man, with her magnificent hair uncovered and her eyes unshaded by hat or cap. Gilbert was absolutely dazzled by her loveliness, and as she came towards him smiling, with outstretched hands, his senses seemed to reel, and he felt for a moment that he was dreaming, and that this beautiful vision would fade from before his eyes.

She seated herself beside him and began telling him how pleased she was to see him.

"I thought you had changed your mind and did not mean to come."

"Why?" he inquired, striving to steady his brain, which still seemed in a state of chaotic disorder.

"You are half-an-hour late," glancing at a little gold clock on the mantel-shelf. "As a rule, my guests are punctual."

"Yes, I suppose so, when they are given the privilege of calling on you; but I really could not help myself to-night. My father, as you know, is an invalid, and he makes claims on my time and attention that I cannot ignore."

"Of course not," she assented gently, toying with a splendid ostrich-feather fan, mounted in ebony.

"He detained me to-night, but to-morrow, or the next time you permit me to call on you, I shall be punctual to the minute."

"On the score of that promise you are forgiven, and you shall come and see me whenever you like."

"Princess! do you really mean that?" he cried, almost wild with delight, for he was little more than a boy, only just twenty-two, and he was intoxicated by the subtle charm of the Russian beauty.

"Yes. I have so few friends, I shall be glad to add you to the number."

"And I shall be only too proud to be of them, though I feel you are wrong when you say they are few. I am sure I shall be only one in a multitude."

"It is you who are wrong," she replied softly, while a look of deep melancholy spread over her beautiful face. "I have had acquaintances by the score, but few friends. We Russians are so trammelled. We have to be careful even in the selection of our friends. We don't really know the true meaning of the word freedom."

"So I have heard," replied Gilbert, looking at her with interest. "I suppose we English understand it better than any other nation."

"I suppose so, unless it be the Americans."

"Ah, they are free, without any mistake," he laughed.

"I wish I could say the same of my unfortunate country people. But we are all slaves. Patriotism makes many of us so; fear some. There are such hideous possibilities for some of us;" and

for a moment her face grew very white, and her dilated eyes gazed straight before her, as though fascinated by some horror; but recovering herself she went on, "Englishwomen are so happy in being able to marry as they choose."

"And cannot Russians?" asked Gilbert impressively.

"Very few. We cannot follow the dictates of our hearts; we marry from policy, or passion, or convenience, seldom for love. Sometimes it is to save a father from the mines, sometimes a mother from a weary imprisonment, sometimes a brother from the assassin's knife."

"But you—you will not have to do that," exclaimed the infatuated young man, catching her hand between his in his eagerness.

"No," she replied, in slow sweet tones, letting her hand remain in his, and turning her magnificent eyes on him; "happily I am in England, and can follow the promptings of my own heart, however foolish they may be." And as she spoke these encouraging words Gilbert felt his hand gently pressed by hers.

"Princess," he cried, carried away by his feelings, and losing his head altogether, for was it not evident this peerless creature had a tenderness for him, "dare I, may I hope? May I speak, and tell you something of what is in my heart?"

"It is too soon to speak," she returned gently. "We hardly know anything of each other yet, but you may—hope."

"Thanks," he exclaimed, kissing her hands again and again, so deeply moved that he did not see the strange look of disgust and repugnance that overspread her fair face.

After that it was all over with Gilbert Lovelace. Day by day he grew more infatuated with Petrovna Dormanoff, more her adorer, more her slave. She was the star, and he was the poor moth striving to singe its frail wings. His heart was engaged to a certain extent, not quite so much, however, as he thought, but his vanity was deeply impressed and engaged, and he told himself over and over again that there was some fascination about him which she had discovered and fallen in love with.

He told himself this so often that at last one night he summoned courage and begged her to consent to become his wife, and somewhat to his astonishment she did consent. But at the same time she made conditions, against which he found it useless to protest.

Absolute secrecy was one. Not a creature was to be told of their engagement. There was to be no thought of marriage until he had been appointed *attaché*, and then the marriage was to take place quite privately, and they were to start for the continent directly afterwards. To all this the poor deluded youth agreed, for the very simple reason that he found it useless to object. His lovely and charming princess had a will ten times as strong and determined as his own, and as usual the victory went to the strong. Moreover, she kept him at a distance, cleverly, and in such a way that he

hardly noticed it. Yet had he not been so bewitched he must inevitably have noticed that he had few if any of the privileges of an affianced lover. He was never permitted to kiss anything save her hands, his head had never rested against that marble shoulder on which he longed to pillow it; his arm had never encircled that lithe waist in all their long interviews. He was fire, but she was ice, and somehow or other the ice never melted in the heat, retaining always its cool hardness. Even under his rhapsodies, under the torrent of his vows and protestations of undying love and adoration, she remained calmly unmoved. The beating of her heart did not quicken by a pulse, nor her eyelids droop, nor her hands quiver, and yet she managed by encouraging words and superb *finesse* to impress him with the idea that she was very fond of him; and his vanity made him fall into the trap baited with flattery.

So matters went on until April arrived with her robe of vernal green, jewelled with sweet wild blossoms, and Mr. and Mrs. Lovelace knew nothing of the entanglement into which their son had got himself, while he grew daily more restless, more anxious that his appointment should arrive.

It came at last, and to his delight he was ordered to start for St. Petersburg in less than a fortnight. Without loss of time he repaired to the Valley House, and found the princess in her drawing-room, pretending to be busy over a dainty piece of work, and he was so full of his news and his plans for the future that he did not notice how her eyes sparkled, nor mark the red hectic spot that glowed in either cheek, nor the state of suppressed excitement in which she was.

"We must arrange all our plans now," he said, seating himself beside her and taking her hand.

"Of course," she assented; and then they talked together for some two or three hours, and before he left her they had settled everything.

A week later Gilbert, after a tender adieu with Petrovna, at which he displayed quite as much emotion as would have been necessary were he leaving her for years instead of days, started for London, enriched by a heavy purse and his fond father and mother's blessings. The first thing he did when he arrived at his rooms in Piccadilly was to dismiss his manservant with a liberal *douceur*, and the old woman who acted as cook and housekeeper, and to engage a couple of new servants at enormous wages for the space of one week. This done he set about settling up all his affairs, went to the Foreign Office for his passport and the papers that were necessary, then returning to his rooms, sat waiting impatiently for the princess to arrive.

She had promised to come to his rooms, actually to his rooms, and then they were to be married early the next morning. He expected her at eleven, but time wore on and it was midnight, and

still she had not arrived. He was in a fever of impatience, could hardly contain or control his anxiety.

What could be the matter? Had an accident happened?

At last, just when he felt he could bear the tension and anxiety no longer, he heard the sound of wheels stopping before the house, and tearing down the stairs, he was just in time to see the princess alighting from a cab, followed by the old Pole, as the first rosy glow of light heralded the coming dawn in the eastern sky.

"Have you been anxious, *mon ami*?" she asked softly, giving him both her hands.

"Anxious! I have been nearly mad!" he cried, crushing her hands in his strong grasp till she nearly shrieked with pain. "What was it? Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing, *cher* Gilbert. The train was detained, that was all."

"All! And I have been nearly mad."

"Poor boy! how you love me," she murmured; and for a moment her eyes rested on him with a queer look of regret in their brilliant depths.

"I worship you," he replied quietly. "But come, you must be famished," and he led the way upstairs to his dining-room, where supper was laid; and while Petrovna trifled with some chicken, she questioned him closely and curiously as to his visit to the Foreign Office and all matters connected with the journey, learning that he had engaged a saloon carriage in the Dover express that left Charing Cross between eight and nine at night, and made all arrangements to go at that time.

When she had learnt all she wanted to know, she became rather silent and thoughtful, and resisted all his importunities that she should go and lie down, declaring that she should remain in the *salon* with Surchen, the old Polish woman, who, to Gilbert's indignation, had remained sitting bolt upright on a chair like a wooden figure, apparently deaf and blind to all that was passing, still an insurmountable obstacle to that love-making in which the foolish young man would have wished to indulge.

"Do you like my dress," inquired the princess, touching the folds of a grey cashmere she wore, as she rose from the table, that the strange servants had loaded liberally with dainties.

"It is charming, like everything you wear. Are you going to be married in it?"

"Yes."

"What a splendid cross," touching a cross of brilliants hanging round her neck by a grey ribbon. "Is it the only ornament you mean to wear?"

"Yes; except a ring that matches it. Oh, by the way, dear Gilbert, this ring Paulo left at a jeweller's in Regent Street. I am loath to lose it; and as it may be long before either of us return to this country, will you, like the dear boy you are, go and fetch it for me?"

"Of course, dearest, I will; but there is plenty of time yet."

"Perhaps; but I want you with me for at least an hour before we drive to the church. I may be nervous," leaning over the back of his chair and placing her hand on his arm with a caressing gesture, utterly unlike her usual cold way, but glancing at the clock uneasily as she spoke, for the hands showed it was twenty minutes to nine. "Besides, I must have a bouquet," she went on hurriedly; "will you get me the prettiest one you can?"

"Your word is my law," he rejoined gaily, kissing the hand that lay on his arm; "and though it grieves me to leave you for even an hour, I go at your bidding," and taking up his hat, he went out.

The princess watched him from the window, and waved her hands gracefully as he looked up; but the moment he was out of sight a change came over her. The smiles died away, the mouth became firm and resolute, the eyes glowed with the fire of determination.

"Quick, Surchen, lock the door!" she exclaimed imperiously. "We must hurry—remember we have barely an hour. The Folkestone tidal train starts at 9.40. We are lost if we miss that;" and hastily tearing open a parcel the Pole held, she drew out a fair, curly wig, similar in colour to Gilbert's fair locks, and while her companion secured the doors, dashed into Lovelace's bedroom, and began speedily to divest herself of her grey gown and feminine apparel.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

About an hour later, Gilbert returned to his rooms, the great blazing diamond on his finger and a costly bouquet in his hand.

He expected to find the princess where he left her, and surprised at not doing so, he went at once to his bedroom. An exclamation escaped his lips, for here all was confusion. His clothes were strewn about, and shirts, collars, gloves, boots and ties were scattered about higgledy-piggledy, while his largest portmanteau lay open and empty hard by. With a foreboding at his heart he tore at the bell.

"Where is Madame Petrovna?" he asked the servant who appeared.

"The lady has gone, sir," replied the man.

"Gone! What do you mean?" he gasped.

"I don't know, sir," responded James, who was slightly mystified by the whole proceeding. "I haven't seen the lady since you went out; but the old woman said I was to give you this," handing him a letter and then discreetly retiring.

For a moment he gazed at it speechlessly, and then tore it open with trembling hands.

"MON AMI,

"Will you ever forgive me? I have not only stolen your heart, but a suit of your clothes as well, and your passport, and papers. We are nearly the same height, and with a fair wig I shall pass very well for Mr. Gilbert Lovelace, and reach Russia, from which country I have been most unjustly exiled; and what is more, at St. Petersburg I shall meet and be united to Ivan, my Ivan, whom I love and adore even as you love me. Forgive me, and forget me; and accept my deepest gratitude and sincerest thanks for the help you have all unwittingly given me to regain my own country and my lover's society. Please keep the ring as a souvenir of

"Your grateful friend,

"PETROVNA DORMANOFF."

As Gilbert read the last word, he threw up his arms, and with a cry like a wounded animal, fell senseless on the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Lovelace, junior, had a severe attack of brain fever that laid him low for many a long week; and Mr. Lovelace, senior, had enough to do in using his influence in high quarters to hush up the little Russian scandal; but when Gilbert recovered his senses and his health, no one said anything more about a diplomatic career for him. He went to Devonshire and settled down as a hog-breeding, sheep-rearing Devon squire; and after some six or seven years, married pretty Ella Wilford, the doctor's sister, to his mother's great delight, and made a good husband, and seemed quite content with his rustic, commonplace wife. All the same for that, though, he never quite forgot Princess Dormanoff, nor that episode in his otherwise dull and highly respectable life.

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## OVERSTRAINED HONOUR.

By NORA VYNNE,

AUTHOR OF "LADY ATHERTON'S SACHET," "A DIFFICULT CASE," ETC.

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"**I** THINK you are very unkind to me, Judy."

As these words, delivered in a tone half complaining, half caressing, fell on her ears, Judith Gale looked up and laughed good-naturedly. She was lying on the floor at full length—and a good deal of it—a cushion under her head, and a copy of "As You Like It" (acting version) in her hands, she was reading softly to herself.

"You don't take the least interest in what I say, Judy."

"You see you have said it so often, my dear, and I am busy, really busy."

"Can't you attend to me for a little while? Just a little while. I want to talk to you."

"You generally do, 'and that when I am disposed to be busy;' you always want to tell it all over again, and to ask me all the questions I have answered on an average eleven times a day since you knew him. Well, as nothing fresh has happened since eleven o'clock this morning when we last discussed the matter, my opinion is just what it was then; I have nothing more to say, and I don't think you have."

This answer, though delivered in a perfectly good-natured tone, would have silenced any one in the world but Maggie Syke, but it had not the slightest effect on her. Maggie Syke was a small plump woman of about forty years old, but she did not look nearly her age until one looked closely; she had fluffy colourless hair, big round china-blue eyes, and an appealing childlike manner, and a habit of keeping her little fat hands—plump and dimpled like a baby's—full in view. At Judy's rebuke she simply flopped down on the floor beside her, and began to stroke her hair gently, the wrong way of course, saying, in her pathetic little chant, "Listen to me. Don't be selfish and unkind."

"Unkind! I am out and out the most patient and long-suffering creature that ever lived," said Judy emphatically; "I listened to you for hours when I wanted to go to sleep last night, and I listened to you all the while we were at breakfast this morning; and now do you know what would happen if we were two men? I should just, in the friendliest manner possible, take you by the

shoulders, shove you out at the door and tell you to go to the ——. Oh, yes, it would be ill-mannered of course, but that is what I should do." She turned to her book and went on reading.

"I would not be thy executioner."

No, but you make me feel a strong tendency that way.

'Thou tellest me there is murder in mine eyes?'

No; not murder exactly. I think the jury would find it justifiable homicide—or femicide if you like it better."

"Judy, dear!"

"Look here, Meg," said Judy seriously, "I really do want to study. You had much better go down and practise your to-morrow's singing lesson. If he does love you, he won't love you any better for singing flat, and even if he does not, you need not torture him; go and practise, there's a good girl."

But the slight softening in her friend's tone was quite as much encouragement as Miss Syke needed.

"Then you think he *does* love me," she chanted.

Judith caught her lower lip between her teeth for a moment; it was a trick she had when her patience was tried. "I've had no evidence one way or another since breakfast-time, and you asked me seven times then."

"Ah, do be nice to me, Judy," with another irritating rub on the smooth dark hair; "I am so unhappy; you used to say you thought he liked me."

"I did say so. I thought from his manner the first time I went with you for your lesson that he liked you very much indeed, and when you asked me I said so."

"Well, if he liked me then, of course he likes me now."

Judy did not speak. She knew how Miss Syke's pathetic infantile manner, charming enough for a few days, was deadly wearisome after awhile, how her pretty confiding way of talking about herself pleased most people until they found she could talk of nothing else, and that what looked like a touching proof of confidence was simply the result of illimitable egotism.

"Do you think he likes me now?"

"My dear girl, if he does, he will tell you so himself."

"But I want to know what you think."

What Judith thought brought a hot blush to her face, but she hid it behind her book, murmuring:

"'Tis but a peevish boy, yet he talks well."

Miss Syke got up, and walking to the glass, began to contemplate her reflection.

"Do you think I look older than he is? do you think he thinks so?"

"I have not the remotest means of knowing what he thinks."

"But what do you think yourself?"

"That 'Pheebe' is a very pretty part, and I shall make something of her—if ever you give me time to study, that is."

"But about my age, dear?"

"You know what I think on that subject. Considering that we all profess to believe ourselves immortal, age does not matter on either side, and I can't see any difference between a woman of forty marrying a man of thirty and a man of forty marrying a woman of thirty, or a girl of eighteen, as more often happens."

"Then you think he might marry me."

"I think if he does, and you worry him as you worry me, he will have an uncommonly hard time of it."

"I wonder if he knows how old I am. I wish he had not sent me to his brother about that life insurance: you see I had to put my real age down, and his brother would be sure to tell it to him. Do you think that was why he sent me?"

"I do not, for two reasons; first, because he is a gentleman, and secondly, because I should say he has a tolerably fair idea of your age without resorting to underhand tricks."

"Then why should he send me there?"

"Because he was so good-natured as to wish you to have good legal advice gratis, and had no idea of the contemptible motives you would assign to him. I can't tell how such thoughts enter your mind, Maggie. I am quite sure they never enter Charles Rathlin's."

There was something in the tone which warned Miss Syke that her friend's patience had been tried almost too far. To be sure she had said the same things in answer to the same questions some seventeen times before, but never with quite so much decision. Miss Syke rose and, crossing the room, began to put on her bonnet and veil at the glass, arranging her colourless little curls with elaborate precision; but it was not in her to be silent long—after a few moments she began afresh:

"You came out with his name very fluently just now, Judy. I always call him *Mr. Rathlin*."

"Can't help it," said Judy shortly, "hear it at the theatre—got it on the programme—incidental music by Charles Rathlin, you know."

"I wish he had not written that music," said Maggie crossly; "he will be always at the theatre now."

"Nonsense, no one wants him there."

"But he goes, I am sure. I daresay you often see him when I don't know."

"Every single time I have seen him there, or anywhere else, I have told you," cried Judy indignantly; then, changing her tone, she added quietly, "I don't know why I should do so, but I have. Now do let me go on with my work, my dear."

"You're *very* cross this morning," said Maggie plaintively.

"Not cross; but what would you think if I came and worried you all the time you were having your singing lesson?"

"That would be very different; I could not sing if you did."

"Well, I can't read."

"There, then, I won't interrupt her any more, that I won't; she shall have all the afternoon to herself, that she shall. I have got to go out and give those wretched little children a music lesson, so you will have the room to yourself; it isn't quite time yet to go, though. Oh! I say, Judy, can you lend me a pair of gloves?"

"Yes. Top drawer, left hand corner."

"Thank you, darling; which pair shall I take? May I have the dove-coloured pair? I wish your gloves were not so large for me. Oh! may I put this pin in my veil?"

"If you like."

"Thank you so much, dear. Oh! Judy dear, one thing before I go; will you not change your mind and come down to Saltsands with me at Easter?"

"No, can't afford it."

"It would be *so* nice. Mr. Rathlin will be only a little way off, and he has promised to come over sometimes and help me with my cantata."

"Awfully good of him, but *I'm* not writing a cantata."

"But you would be company for me; we could give up our rooms here and take a little cottage together. Mr. Rathlin thinks it would be a charming plan, he was quite taken with the idea; he thinks it is so much better for me not to be alone, people get so egotistical when they live alone; they think of no one but themselves. You had much better come with me."

"Thanks, I prefer to be by myself and risk the egotism."

"But you don't think of me a bit."

Judy gave a smothered laugh. "No need, dear, you think of yourself so industriously," she murmured; but Miss Syke did not hear her, she was going on steadily with her own reflections.

"It does look as if he liked me, doesn't it? he was quite eager about your coming, too. Before I told him you might perhaps come with me he did not seem as if he quite liked my plan, and when I asked if he would come over now and then to help me with my cantata, he was very doubtful about it. You see, he could not very well visit me here alone."

"I don't see why. I'd have any one I liked to come and see me wherever I lived."

"Oh!" in a superior tone, "but I have been brought up to the habit of having a chaperone."

"Thanks for the reminder. I haven't, but I have got on very well."

"It is a great risk to marry any one so much younger than myself. I am sure an elderly husband would make me happier; what do you think, dear?"

Judy gave no answer, so Miss Syke went on placidly :

" Of course I shall give up teaching music when I am married, and spend all my time improving myself."

" Nice sort of wife you'll make at that rate."

" Of course I shall fulfil all my duties properly, Judy. I am not the sort of woman to shirk my duties. I should make a good wife, don't you think so, dear ? "

" Oh, charming ! "

" But good-bye now, dear. I'm going now, I shan't be back till tea-time. I have some shopping to do after I have given my lessons. How I detest those three tiresome children and their prosy old uncle. Did I tell you they called him 'Molly Darling' —he is always putting on porous plasters, and talking about himself and his ailments. Well, good-bye."

" Good-bye."

" Ain't you going to kiss me, dear ? "

Judy got up from the floor and kissed her. Maggie Syke put her sentimental round little face up against the girl's strong young shoulder (brushing off a good deal of superfluous powder on to it) and sighed heavily.

" Oh ! Judy dear, it is so dreadful to be in love ; do be nice to me," she chanted.

" 'Why, I am sorry for thee, gentle Sylvia,' " quoted Judy with a nervous laugh ; " I dare say you've got it very bad, dear, and he is —he is awfully interesting, and all that—but keep it in bounds, Meg ; don't show it till you are sure ; he won't like you any the less."

" Why, Judy, how your heart is beating ; you ought not to fling yourself about as you do. It can't be good for you to lie on the floor like that—put on your hat and walk to High Street Station with me ; it will do you good, and I have so much more I want to say to you."

Judy broke into a laugh, and shaking Miss Syke into an upright position, straightened her bonnet and literally pushed her through the door.

" Good-bye Meg," she called cheerfully, " try to bring back something fresh to talk about when you come in."

Then she shut the door, and picking up her copy of "As You Like It," which she had left on the floor, began to walk slowly up and down the room, reading and thinking by turns. She was a tall handsome girl, a trifle angular and unformed as yet, but straight and supple, with clear-cut features, and a bright resolute face ; her very footsteps sounded firm and decided as she walked to and fro.

Judith Gale and Margaret Syke were friends of about a year's standing. They had made each other's acquaintance in a boarding-house where they both had been staying, and had taken to each other. Judith had been amused and attracted by the other's child-

like and confiding ways, and, moreover, had pitied her because the marriage of a brother had forced her to leave her home and fight for herself in the world. After a time, when she found that Miss Syke's brother and sister-in-law had been perfectly willing for her to reside with them, and wrote her affectionate and hearty letters, Judy's sympathy cooled a little, and when she found that Miss Syke had a nice little fortune of her own, and that in her case fighting for herself simply meant making spasmodic efforts to achieve distinction, first in one walk of life and then in another, it died out altogether.

Still, as she had begun the friendship, Judy kept it up, for she was not the sort of girl who changes readily; besides she had really a sort of tolerant regard for her egotistical sentimental little friend.

On the other hand, Maggie Syke had taken to Judy as she had taken to dozens before, and had made her the last of a long series of bosom friends; but she had certainly never kept a friend so long before, generally she wore out their patience or grew tired of them in a few months; for one of her strongest characteristics was that her friends must have no friends but herself, and this was trying to girls with sisters, or of a sociable disposition. Now, in Judy's case there was no difficulty, for a lonelier girl did not live; she was a solitary hard-working orphan, with few friends, and no desire to change them; she had positively lived nine months with Maggie Syke without finding out her jealousy, and it was only since Miss Syke had taken up music and fallen in love with her music-master that she had noticed the trait through the bitter hatred Maggie seemed to entertain for all Mr. Rathlin's other pupils.

"Poor Meg, poor Meg, what a wretch I feel," murmured Judy as she walked up and down with her book in her hand. "What a wretch, and what a sneak."

'So holy and so perfect is my love,  
And I in such a poverty of Grace.'

No, that's out of my part—Silvius says that. Oh, poor little Meg, I wonder if it was my fault. He certainly seemed to like her that first day I saw him; she told me to notice and I noticed.

'There be some women, Silvius, had they marked him  
In parcels as I did would have gone near  
To fall in love with him; but for my part  
I love him not, nor hate him not, and yet—'

Oh, dear, I shall never get this learned, I wonder is it my fault he has changed.

'He said mine eyes were black and my hair black.'

No, he didn't; he said I ought to take care she had some hot tea whenever she came in, as if I had nothing else to do but sit by the fire and keep her tea hot. That certainly looked as if he were in love with her; a man in love always forgets that any one can have

anything more important to do than look after the woman who interests him. He made me feel quite selfish for having any affairs of my own. Oh, he was certainly fond of her then.

'For what had he to do to chide at me.'

No, that's the wrong place. Well," as the landlady opened the door. "Well, Mrs. Grass?"

"Mr. Rathlin wishes to see you, miss."

Judy started, the resolute look on her face hardened, she shut up her book with a snap.

"I will be bitter with him, and passing short,"

she murmured, but she came forward with a very commonplace manner.

"I am so sorry Miss Syke is out," she said.

"It is not of any consequence, I have only brought her some papers—examination papers."

"Oh, she will know all about them, I suppose?"

"I don't think she will; I am afraid I shall have to ask you to give her a message," said Mr. Rathlin quietly.

"It is a pity you should have brought them when Maggie was out; I thought you knew she went out on Wednesdays, as you found her the pupils she goes to."

She did not look at him, although he was a very pleasant object to look at, being tall and well built, with a handsome clean-shaved face and shining close-cut dark hair. He had none of the haggard raggedness of the conventional musician; he looked something between a country gentleman and a barrister.

When he saw the girl's face studiously turned away, a look of resolution that quite equalled her own, rose to his eyes; he walked slowly towards her with the papers in his hands.

"Will you be so kind as to tell her," he began, "that I know very well she cannot answer the questions off-hand, she must look up the answers in the books I have lent her. Tell her I am not trying to find out what she knows, but to put her in the way of knowing a little more."

Judy glanced at the papers. "I don't know much of music," she said, "but it strikes me that any one who cannot work these will be simply wasting time trying to write a cantata."

"Yes, have you said that to Miss Syke?"

"I am not her music master."

"Do you think she would believe you if you did say that?"

"I don't profess to know anything of music."

"But you do profess to know something of character, and so do I. I believe the attempt to write a cantata will be a very useful lesson in music to Miss Syke."

"It will be a very cruel lesson."

"But it will be private, and therefore less painful than it would be to learn what she must learn in full class."

"Is that why you want her to go to Saltsands?" said Judy, her manner relaxing a little.

"I want her to go! It was no suggestion of mine."

"Ah, no more it was, I forgot; your suggestion was that I should go with her."

"Well, what then? It was a very good suggestion."

"Maggie seems to be under the impression that it came from her."

"Well, perhaps it did—let us suppose it did, if she said so; but no, Miss Gale, let us be frank. I suggested it, and is there any reason why I should not?"

Judy was silent, she would not say "no," and dared not say "yes," lest he should ask for the reason, and so have an opportunity of saying what she was determined not to hear.

Rathlin went on, "It is not good for man to be alone, and it is worse for a woman; it is bad enough while she is at work, but a lonely holiday is frightful. You had much better go with Miss Syke."

"I am sorry my own affairs prevent my being as serviceable to Miss Syke as you think I should."

"And who told you it was merely for Miss Syke's sake I made the suggestion, pray?"

"That is what she believes, and it is natural she should believe it."

"And if I told you it was of you I was thinking?"

"I should not believe you. I am not your pupil. It would be very presumptuous of you to try to direct what I do, or where I go. No; if you said anything of that kind, I should tell you to say it to Miss Syke—it may interest her, it does not interest me."

"You will not believe it was for your sake?"

"Not for one moment."

"But if I declared to you that it was?"

"I should say, Good afternoon!"

They were standing facing each other now, and she saw that all her fencing was of no use—the fight was coming. So she stood, meeting his eyes quietly, both her hands well in view, clasped carelessly but firmly together; but all her courage could not keep the veins in her throat from throbbing and trembling; he saw the shadows quiver on them in the dim afternoon light.

If she was resolute, so was he. He saw how strong and true and high-hearted she was, and told himself he would not leave her until he had won her. Aloud he said coolly:

"Oh, 'Good afternoon' is pretty well as a beginning; but I am going to say much more than that. I have come to tell you how I love you, and I won't be turned aside from saying it."

"Well?"

Charles Rathlin remembered once playing a charming game with some children, wherein the fun consisted in one of the party being a patriot and being shot (they were young children, but had already discovered that the natural end of a patriot is an early and violent death). The shooting was accomplished by a pint of cold water discharged full in the face from a milk basin. Rathlin had been the patriot, and that "Well?" recalled his sensations at the time very forcibly indeed. It took his breath away for a moment, but after a time he went on, though not so fluently this time:

"That means you knew it, of course. That's good; for I tried to make it plain to you. I love you very much indeed. I know I am not good enough for you, I don't ask you to think I am, but I do ask you to believe I love you very truly."

"How can I think he can be mine and true who has been false to Fulvia?"

That's not in my play, but when I get hold of Shakspeare I wander about a little."

"Don't wander now; keep to the point, and the point is, I love you."

"But I had rather talk of Fulvia."

"As you please. She was elderly, by the way, and of a jealous and crabbed disposition."

"Antony knew that, or should have known it, before he asked her to marry him."

"I quite agree with you. But suppose Antony had never asked her; never said a word that could be construed into an intention of doing so."

"Never given her violets, nor taken flowers from her, never bullied a girl he saw for the first time, for not taking more care of her," went on Judith coolly, her eyes still meeting his, her hands still careless and impassive.

"Good heavens! she asked me for the violets," he exclaimed angrily. "Could I help her bringing me the other things? Is it possible she ——"

"Stay, if you please, Mr. Rathlin. We will keep Miss Syke's name out of our conversation: you have no right to suppose for a moment that we have made you the subject of discussion. Any opinion I may have formed has been formed from my own observation."

Rathlin recovered his self-control.

"If you have formed any opinion concerning me I have a right to know it," he said.

"Certainly. When I went with her to your class-room, I saw, or fancied I saw, a vast difference between your manner to her and your manner to your other pupils."

"Go on."

"When we remained after the rest of the class had left, and you talked to her about her own affairs and yours, all you said,

every word, every tone, every look, went to make me believe that you cared for her."

"So I did ; I thought her charming. Go on."

"I have no more to say."

"Oh, yes, you have if you intend to be just. You spoke of an opinion."

"Yes ; I saw you cared for her—any one could have seen that. I supposed you were not well enough off to marry, and so you did not speak to her."

"That was so ; you were perfectly right. I am better off now, by the way, but that is not the question. Go on."

"Afterwards"—her voice did tremble now, but she went on bravely—"afterwards I began to think that—I had been mistaken."

"You did not," he said with such quiet force that the words did not sound rude. "You did not think so, and it is beneath you to say what is not true."

"Then, if you will have it, I thought you had changed your mind, and I thought I would never be a party to the betrayal of my friend. I have no more to say."

"No. Then listen to me, and judge me fairly. I may have been to blame, but I don't deserve such hard words or such contemptuous tones, and I will not bear them, even from you. I thought I cared for Miss Syke ; I did care for her at first, every one who sees her likes her at first, every one who grows better acquainted with her loses their liking. I can't help it if I speak cruelly of a woman ; you force me to defend myself. You know yourself how every student who comes to my classes has been her devoted slave for a day or two, and then indifferent to her. I did like her, and if I had ever told her so, if I had ever said a word of love to her, I should deserve to have you shield yourself behind your loyalty, and pierce me through and through with your scorn ; but I have never said one word beyond ordinary friendship to her."

"True. But why not ?"

"For the reason you guessed. It was a good reason ; she had told me of the luxury she had been brought up in, and I hesitated to ask her to share my poverty. That hesitation saved me. It was meant for her good ; but surely I have a right to let it serve for mine ? "

"I do not know."

"Think. Suppose she had liked me, and never told me so ; then suppose she found out she really loved some one else ; would it be treason for her to marry the man she loved, because of an idle, passing fancy for me—a fancy I'd had no idea of ? "

"Oh, but if she had an idea of it ? "

For the first time he seemed to lose heart ; the fight was going very much against him. He dropped his head and hesitated ; he could not deny her words ; he knew poor Maggie Syke had shown a very marked fondness for him ; but then the like had more than

once happened to the handsome young musician, without any fault of his, and he could not tell how far he had been to blame in this case.

"Has she said—does she ——" he began.

"We will leave her out of it. You are to assume that she has never confided in me. But if I could see, and could form an opinion, could not she ?"

"Good heavens ! Is it my fault if you were so quick to see what I wished to keep to myself?" he cried. "Am I to be bound by a three days' fancy, that neither of you had right to know of, to marry a woman ten years older than myself? Do you know what she told me you said one day? That you pitied her husband, if ever she married, for he would be the most wretched man on the face of the earth ; that she would wear out his very life with her jealousy and her exacting temper. She told me that as if it were a joke ; you know best whether it is true or not, whether you meant it when you said it."

Judy remembered the speech ; it was the result of a week's worry, when Maggie had suspected her of a desire to strike up a friendship with a girl who was playing in the same piece with her, and she had most certainly meant the words when she had spoken them.

Rathlin went on :

"And you would condemn me to that—it would be torment, perpetual hopelessness. Think of it ! You must know very little of life, or you would not dare to wish such a thing. You say I am bound to her——"

"No, no ! I do not say so—I was wrong if I said so before. You must not marry her if you hate her so ; it would be terrible for you both if you married her."

"Then I am free ?"

"Yes, you are free ; it is right that you should be free. I see now it would be intolerable if you were to be bound by a slight fancy that, for most generous reasons, you never spoke of—your mere thoughts that we had no right to know |cannot, must not, bind you."

"And if I am free ?"

He moved towards her eagerly. She sprang back against the wall, entreating him with a passionate gesture to stand back.

"Do not look like that, for God's sake ! Do not look so glad, or I cannot bear it. Yes, you are free—free to leave her, free to marry whom you will, free to marry any woman in the world, *except me !*"

"Judy ! Why ?"

"No, not me—not her friend—not the girl she took to see you, who rejoiced with her in her fancied good fortune, who heard day by day—yes, I must own to it now—who heard of every word you said, of every sign you gave of caring for her—not her confidant,

the sharer of her hopes and her fears—not her friend, her one friend."

"Then my freedom is of no value, for if I do not marry you, I don't care what becomes of me. I may just as well marry her as not. Oh, Judy! think again. I will make you so happy."

"Could you, do you think—could any one make me happy if I acted so vilely?"

"It is no fault of yours that she told you; you never asked for her confidence—I am sure you never wanted it. Why should you suffer because she can't keep from talking about herself?"

"You show me my fault clearly. I ought to have gone away at once, when I saw—when I suspected what would happen."

"Listen to me, Judy. I love you, I believe on my soul that you love me. We meant to do no wrong—we have done no wrong, only circumstances have been very cruel to us. Is it just that we should suffer because of circumstances that we could not help? Will it make her any happier to know that we are miserable?"

"It will make her much more miserable to think her friend has stolen her happiness. I tell you I will not do it."

"Judy! this is madness!"

"No, it is honour. What would you say of a man who betrayed his friend as you would have me betray mine?"

"But you are not a man, you are a woman. No one expects this tragic honour from you; no one thinks of expecting it from a woman."

"Oh, yes! I am a woman, with all a woman's faults and weakness; but, woman as I am, God made me true as death, and you shall not make me less than He meant me to be."

She stood erect and proud, not hiding her suffering, but triumphant over it; and seeing her fearless face, and hearing her resolute tone, he knew that there was no appeal from the sentence she had spoken.

The fight was over, and he was conquered. He knew it, and submitting heart-broken to his defeat, was yet glad that the woman he loved was great enough to win such a victory. Had he not loved her for her perfect truth, her immaculate honour? And if he had been able to break down her honour and truth, would not such a victory have been a calamity for them both?

Woman-like, she half rued her triumph when she saw her antagonist conquered; she came close to him and laid her hand on his.

"I cannot bear to see you suffer," she said.

"You shall not see it—I will go. Good-bye, dear; you have broken my heart—I think you have broken your own—but we must bear it, for you have chosen the right."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye; you know what those words mean—'God be with you.' God be with you, sweet, in all the years to come. Do not

think I am sorry you will not be less than yourself for my sake—I will try to be glad that I could not lower you."

"Good-bye—Good-bye."

She had moved to a little distance now, and turned her face away. She held out her hand without looking at him.

"Is this all? It is a very cold parting when we think how we love each other, and that we shall never meet again. Surely, for the last time—for the first and last time—"

"No, no! I cannot, I cannot!"

The pain in her tone was so pitiful that he could not insist. Letting her hand fall, he knelt upon the floor and kissed the hem of her skirt, then without speaking again he left her.

He left her; he was wrought to such a pitch of excited honour and reverence, that it never occurred to him to think how many a lover would have refused to leave a woman who dared not trust herself to kiss him.

And she? She brushed away a few bitter, hot tears that rushed through her eyelids and stood a moment trembling and irresolute. It almost seemed as if she would give way to the passionate emotion she had held so well in check until now; but she did not; she went to a cupboard in a corner of the room, and took out—a bottle of poison? a dagger? a nine-barrelled peace-maker? Oh, dear, no! a pot of Liebig's extract, a teacup, and a tablespoonful of port wine. From these, with the addition of a little boiling water, she concocted a very nasty but very invigorating compound, and having drunk it, lay down on the floor to study "As You Like It" in peace until Maggie came in.

You see she was a working woman and had no leisure to indulge her emotions.

It was some time before Miss Syke came in: when she did she went straight up to the looking-glass, and after flinging her bonnet and mantle upon the sofa, began to contemplate her reflection with a good deal of complacency.

"You are late, are you not?" said Judy.

"Yes; have you been dull without me? I have been doing a good deal of shopping on my way home. You were very unkind to me before I went out, but if you can spare me ten minutes for once in a while I'll tell you something interesting."

"What is it, dear?"

Any one but Maggie Syke would have seen the weariness in the girl's face, would have heard the pathetic effort at cheerfulness in her voice, but Maggie Syke had something of interest to communicate, and noticed nothing.

"You don't know why I have been so long?"

"You were shopping, were you not; have you bought many things?"

"Yes, and some of them are pretty things—wedding things, Judy."

"Oh, your *trousseau*; don't you think ——"

"Something very important has happened," said Maggie impressively; "I have come to my senses at last."

"What do you mean?"

"It is not to be expected that I should waste my time waiting while an obscure musician makes up his mind whether he can afford to marry me or not."

"Do you mean—are you saying that you are not going to think any more about Mr. Rathlin, after raving about him all these three months?"

Judy could scarcely believe her ears, and spoke out her amazement without choosing her words.

"I have not been doing anything of the sort," said Miss Syke, with dignity, placidly proceeding to believe what it had become convenient to believe; "I may have wondered now and again if he cared for me, but that is all."

"Oh!" said Judy.

"I have something else to say, dear, only you don't take any interest in *me*."

"I take an interest in this matter, though; what has made you come to this conclusion? Let me hear."

"You know my pupils have an uncle?"

"Yes, the prosy old man they call 'Molly Darling'."

"He is not old nor prosy, and they ought not to call him anything of the sort. Why he is heir to a baronetcy."

Miss Syke spoke as if the prospect of the title conferred perpetual youth and immunity from nicknames.

"Well, what has 'Sir Molly' to do with us?"

"Not anything to do with you, my dear; but he has—that is—he will have a great deal to do with me in future. He has asked me to marry him. You see, dear," with a sweet little giggle, "some people think me attractive if you don't."

Judy pushed back the hair from her eyes—a bewildered incredulous look on her face.

"And Charles Rathlin?" she said.

"Ah, well, Judy, you can't expect me to consider him; I must show a proper regard for my own future; I could not have got on as the wife of a struggling artist; I am much more fitted for society and luxury. I called and left a note at Mr. Rathlin's rooms, telling him I should not go there for any more lessons as I am going to be married, then I went for a walk with—with *him*—you know, dear, and then I did some shopping, and then I came home. Won't you congratulate me, dear? Luke—I think he has such a nice name, Luke Lowther Rothesay—Luke is not more than fifty-five or fifty-seven, and his uncle is several years older, so I shall be Lady Rothesay some day; perhaps I may be able to help you, for I shan't be ashamed to know you, dear. I do hope poor Mr. Rathlin won't feel it very much; I can't help it, you know, if

people will admire me, can I? I have a right to choose whom I will marry; I can't marry just to oblige him. What is the matter, Judy? Are you laughing or crying? Why don't you answer?"

But before Judy had time to answer, the door was flung open with a crash, and Charles Rathlin rushed into the room—an open letter in his hand.

"Judy, it's all right," he cried; "I found this when I got home. She doesn't want me; she is going to marry some one else. Judy! Judy!"

And Judy, without answering, ran straight into his arms and rested there silent. It was his turn to speak now, and he was in no hurry.

"Well, this is very surprising," said Miss Syke, but neither of them seemed to hear her.

"My darling," cried Rathlin at last, "how brave you were, and how we've suffered; how we tortured ourselves. But it is over now, and it is worth all we bore to meet like this, to hold each other like this, to kiss each other as we do now."

This remark was illustrated profusely. Miss Syke could not understand the situation at all, she was simply dumbfounded.

"I think," she said severely, "you have both utterly forgotten my presence, even my existence."

She was quite right, so they had.

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## OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"  
"A CRACK COUNTY," "LANDING A PRIZE," ETC., ETC.

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### PART V.

#### 1.—THE JEALOUS WOMAN.

THE jealous woman is not a nice person at any time, but she is rather less so in the hunting field than in any other place; perhaps because her peculiar failing is there rendered patent to the whole world. She cannot keep it sufficiently under control to prevent people who possess ordinary powers of observation from finding it out, or from noticing how unfairly she rides. Her spirit of emulation passes the customary bounds of politeness, and is too strong not to be resented and censured.

As a rule she is perfectly unconscious of the ridicule which her jealousy evokes, and would be very much surprised and very much annoyed if the comments of her fellow-sportsmen came to her ears. She is under the impression that she is the "observed of all observers," and immensely admired. Her vanity even prevents her from seeing that the men are not as civil as they might be, and avoid her whenever they decently can.

The truth is, she treats them with such scant courtesy that they think there is no harm in paying her back in her own coin. They cease to regard her as a lady, and cannot associate her with anything either feminine or gentle. She is in their eyes that most odious of all creatures extant, an unsexed woman. So with all her pushing and shoving, bustling and cramming, she gains very little.

The gentlemen view her with a dislike bordering on disgust, and are unsparing in their criticisms. Quite unaware of the sentiments they entertain towards her, she endeavours over and over again to beguile them into conversation, and when hounds are not running, tries her utmost to ingratiate herself in their favour, but her efforts in this direction are seldom crowned by success. The men hold obstinately aloof, refuse to smile at her witticisms or show any approval of her smart sayings. For she has a sharp tongue, and can demolish another woman's reputation rather better

than her neighbours. She is clever, caustic and amusing, has a nice figure, and is good-looking into the bargain; and yet the male sex, with all these points in her favour, cannot forgive her for usurping their place at every fence they come to, and for seizing an unfair advantage over them on every possible occasion. Such conduct blots out all charm, and creates a feeling of anger and resentment in the masculine breast. Being a woman, they have not even the satisfaction of swearing at her, which adds insult to injury.

Ladies may ride as hard as anybody else, and yet ride in a feminine fashion, and not get in the way. The dangerous woman is bad enough, but the jealous one is a thousand times worse. The former errs chiefly through ignorance and an exuberance of animal spirits that produces an intoxicating effect; but the latter can plead no such excuse. She knows quite well what she is about, and offends deliberately, altogether ignoring the precept of "Do as thou wouldest be done by." When under the influence of the insane passion that masters her, she is no longer mistress of herself, and will commit every species of absurdity. She will ride a desperate finish, in a ploughed field up to her horse's hocks, whilst hounds have actually never left the covert, and are still hunting busily inside, simply because she has happened to catch sight of a female skirt fluttering ahead. With elbows squared, and arms, hands, legs at work, she imagines that she is doing great things, calculated to rouse the enthusiasm of the whole field.

She never hears the laughter of the bystanders, or sees the contemptuous smiles that wreath every face. A mad struggle for supremacy rages within her breast. It is as if a devil had taken possession of her and converted her into an irresponsible being.

She gallops madly down a road, bespattering her feminine rivals with mud, never dreams of apologizing, and does not draw rein until she has far outstripped them. Then she looks round triumphantly, her face all flushed and heated, and wearing an expression of satisfaction, which seems to say, "There! I am first. It's not a bit of use your trying to get before me, for I shan't put up with such an indignity for a minute. You must see how much better I can ride than you, so what is the good of your trying to compete?"

Most women confine their jealousy exclusively to members of their own sex, but there are some, though happily they are in the minority, who extend it even to the men, and who cannot endure to see more than one or two of the very hardest riders of the whole hunt in front of them. Their poor horses are dreadfully to be pitied, for they treat them with a harshness and a want of consideration that borders on downright cruelty. The animal is regarded as a mere machine, a galloping and jumping piece of mechanism, which must never get out of order, and must go as

long as the rider chooses, without respect to health, humour, or fatigue. Such people are not fit to have horses. They hit them, they urge them, they let heavy gates slam on their sensitive quarters, in order to slink through, and they gallop them up hill and down, through bogs and over plough, and don't once pause to take a very necessary pull. To get on, on, on at all hazards is the only thing they care for, and this they call horsemanship and riding to hounds. Ugh!

Poor, noble steed! The more generous he is, the greater is the advantage taken of him. A jealous woman is not worthy of a good horse. She should always ride a sluggard, since pity, mercy, tenderness, every feminine attribute are merged in the frantic desire to occupy a prominent place, and let no other female get ahead. Ambition is turned to striving, courage to mean emulation; good sense flies, and envy, hatred and malice reign in its place.

If some similarly-constituted individual—for there are jealous men as well as jealous women—attempts to take her turn, she is the first to cry out in tones of severe indignation, “Don’t cut in, sir. Now, sir, what are you doing?” or words to that effect. But she thinks nothing of doing so herself. In truth, it is her usual practice. The fact is, she is not a true sportswoman. Her love of the chase is not a genuine, but a spurious passion. It is the competition of one person riding against another that rouses her to enthusiasm, and not the beautiful sight of a pack of well-bred fox-hounds flashing like a streak of silver over the green pastures in pursuit of their quarry.

Little cares she for either fox or hounds. “Who was first, second and third? Did you see where I was, and how well I rode?” are the sole thoughts occupying her mind. Everything else is as naught in comparison. She has neither a kindly nor generous nature. When other women get falls and meet with accidents, though she pretends to condole, in her heart she rejoices at their misfortunes. She seems to imagine that in avoiding similar disasters she is possessed of superior skill and knowledge.

She can be pleasant enough to the ladies who don’t “go.” They are not in her way, and don’t offend her susceptibilities; but those who ride hard inspire sentiments of such extreme hostility, that she has the greatest difficulty in concealing them. Her artificial politeness and vinegar-sweet speeches deceive no one. They are too laboured, and lack sincerity. Genuine kindness is felt to be wanting. Everybody laughs at the jealous woman behind her back, and she has hardly a single friend, male or female, in the whole hunt. Cold civility or disdainful tolerance greets her on all sides.

If only she could divest herself of a certain uneasy consciousness, which makes her erroneously suppose that people take a vital interest in her performances, and never weary of discussing them, she would enjoy the chase a great deal more than she does at

present. But she can't realize the very simple fact that nobody cares twopence whether she be first or last, jumps or doesn't jump, and that she is not the central point of attention, on which two or three hundred pairs of eyes are continually riveted. Folks as a rule have enough to do looking after themselves, without looking after her, and in the majority of cases are taken up with their own doings, not those of their neighbours. Number One is of such paramount importance to the jealous woman, that she can't understand how it is the interesting numeral does not prove equally so to her companions.

If anything goes wrong out hunting, her horse refuses, or she gets left behind, indignant at occupying a backward position she prefers to come straight home, and is ready to cry with vexation and mortification. All her pleasure for the day is gone. She can't reconcile herself to the humiliation of riding about with the shirkers and roadsters. For these reasons she seldom derives any real enjoyment from a day's hunting. So many things have to go right, and even if they do, there is nearly always a drawback, in the shape of some other hard-riding woman, perhaps younger and with more nerve, who throws down the gauntlet. It is impossible to be happy under such conditions. Her philosophy is not sufficient to enable her to see how very immaterial it is whether Brown, Jones, or Robinson holds the proud position of heading the hard-riding division. The triumphs of the chase are very fleeting, and often depend quite as much upon the horse as upon the rider, and yet she hankers after them with an inordinate eagerness, amounting to positive folly.

Out of the saddle, the jealous woman is not unfrequently a pleasant and lady-like person, both conversible and intelligent; but in it she assumes a different character altogether, and appears completely to lose her head. Or does her real nature come to the surface, thanks to the savage excitement occasioned by fox-hunting?

Anyhow, the desire for distinction, which in a moderate degree may be regarded as a virtue, becomes in her case a foolish and absorbing passion which makes her appear in the most unfavourable light.

It destroys her feminine qualities, and reduces her to the level of a very inferior man.

Moreover, it renders her a target for jeers, jests and sneers of every description.

If she only knew the truth, she might perhaps be brought to realize that in return for an indifferent, "Oh, ah! yes, she goes very hard," this is all she gains.

She alienates her friends, and as the years pass becomes more and more isolated, until at last, when her turn comes to meet with a bad accident, the voice of public opinion exclaims: "What! nearly dead! Concussion of the brain—picked up in-

sensible! Ah, well, serves her right. She always would ride so infernally jealous."

What is the result? Her craving for admiration and pre-eminence ends in "serves her right."

Misguided woman! Before this harsh verdict is passed upon you, can't you amend your ways? It is not difficult. It is only to get into your head that nobody cares two straws what you do and what you don't do in the hunting field, except yourself. You are just as much an insignificant atom there as in the great big world. And whether the atom jumps this bullfinch or that, shirks one place, avoids another, passes a fellow atom, or is passed by it in return, what matters it? A month—a year hence, and will not all your keen rivalry appear very petty and very ridiculous?

## 2.—THE BORE.

Of all the people we meet in the hunting field, if we were honestly to examine our feelings, the one we most dislike is probably the bore—the fellow whose words go in at one ear and out at the other, and who never has the sense or tact to perceive that his long-winded and interminable stories are infinitely wearisome to the listener.

And the worst of it is, there are so many bores about. The genus is so horribly common, and wherever men are gathered together, there they exist in numbers.

You fly from one only to fall headlong into the arms of another, and get involved in a second tedious narrative before you have had time to shake off the unpleasant impression produced by the first. On probing into the depths of human nature, many rare virtues and agreeable qualities are often discoverable; but the hardest thing of all to find is originality—that little fruitful germ of variation, removed from the vulgar type, which is closely allied to genius.

The bore has not a particle of originality in his whole composition. If he had he would be a character and not a bore. As it is, he is prosy and dull and commonplace to a degree almost past conception. If he *would* only hold his tongue; but, good Heavens! how the man talks. His jaws are never at rest. The subject of conversation he chooses is nearly always himself, or his immediate belongings. Though interesting, no doubt, to him, these topics are not equally so to you. The difficulty is to concentrate one's attention sufficiently to appear decently civil. You are seized by an irresistible inclination to listen to what the people all about you are saying, and you feel unpleasantly conscious that your absent "exactly's, just so's and indeed's," lack the genuine ring of honest sympathy. The whole time that the unconscious bore is holding forth with great volubility and complacency, your entire energies are devoted to pondering over the best means of effecting an escape without doing violence to his susceptibilities. You

wait breathlessly for a pause, which never seems to come. With the best will in the world, it is impossible to derive any pleasure from a conversation that is so entirely one-sided. No matter how it may have been started, the bore always works back to himself and *his* ideas, and utterly refuses to listen to yours. He is much too egotistical to allow of any reciprocity. If through some strange chance he asks a neighbour after his health, he does not wait to hear the reply, but immediately begins a long tirade about his own.

"Ah, my good sir, that was precisely what happened in my case. You remember the day I got that bad fall over timber? I have never recovered from the effects. I feel them constantly. The muscles of my back have been permanently injured. Rheumatism set in, and even now, every time there is a change in the weather, I can't tell you what agonies I suffer. I don't suppose any one is such a martyr as I am. These east winds kill me. They pinch me up, take away my appetite, and upset my liver altogether. Cartwright ordered me to take podophyllin and taraxacum, but what's the good of that? One can't go on taking those sort of messes all one's life. Eh, what? you suffer too? Oh, ah! yes, very likely, very likely. By-the-by, did I tell you about my chestnut mare?"

So he runs on, and won't hearken to you when you try to put in a small word in return, and try to relate *your* experiences and *your* ailments.

The bore is a tremendous hand at dunning. He is always getting up penny readings and entertainments for his particular village, to which he expects all his acquaintances to subscribe. Now it is a church to be restored, anon a stained window to be set up, again, a testimonial to some parish authority whom you know nothing about. But rather than get inveigled into a conversation, you give him half-a-sovereign or a sovereign as the case may be, and fight shy of him for the rest of the season.

But if there is one time more than any other when you pray heart and soul to avoid falling into the clutches of the bore, that time is when hounds are busy drawing a covert. At such seasons, he literally buttonholes you, and rambling on in his usual prosy manner, marches you up and down, up and down, until you are reduced to a state of white heat, and mentally apostrophize your companion whenever a whimper proceeds from the pack. You find yourself compelled to listen to some long uninteresting narrative, instead of being able to dash off in pursuit the instant the fox breaks away. And so you probably lose your start and your temper both together, and use more forcible language than is desirable.

The majority of bores are grumbler as well. Finding fault is an amusement which gives their tongues a fine opportunity of wagging at other people's expense. Whenever sport is poor, they are the first to cry out, though by no means the hardest to

ride. Nothing is rightly managed in their estimation. They are persuaded that if they had the direction of affairs each day would be productive of a brilliant run; but as they haven't, everything is in a state of muddle and confusion. To begin with, hounds are always either too fat or too lean, too slack or too keen, too noisy or too mute. If they go fast, they ought to go slow; if they go slow, they ought to go fast. But the grumbler's peculiar scapegoat is the huntsman. That unfortunate individual, whether justly or unjustly, invariably comes in for condemnation. Epithet after epithet is heaped upon his devoted head. He is a blockhead, an idiot, a fool. Words fail to describe his shortcomings and crass stupidity. He can't hunt, he can't ride, he don't even know the run of a fox. He's as slow as an old woman, and as conceited as a young one.

Neither does the master escape censure. Indeed, indirectly he bears the brunt of the blows.

"He mounts the men badly. Their horses are a positive disgrace to the hunt. He has no notion of keeping the field in order, and always contrives to go to the wrong covert at the wrong time."

In short, the grumbler is never satisfied. To express approbation would detract from his dignity, at all events in his own estimation. No matter how good the sport, he invariably considers that it ought and would have been better had his precious advice only been adopted at the critical moment when hounds threw up their heads and came to the first check. He is ever ready to tender counsel; and one of his peculiarities consists in the extreme indignation he displays when he finds it ignored. For he is always convinced that he knows which way the hunted fox has gone, when the field and huntsman remain in ignorance as to its whereabouts. The grumbling bore is fortunate in one respect. He entertains a remarkably good opinion of himself, which nothing can shake.

As to arguing with him—it is perfectly useless. Just so much waste of breath, for he is essentially an obstinate man, and a narrow-minded one to boot. What *he* thinks, others must think, therefore discussion is to be avoided, since he will talk his opponent's head off without giving him a chance to put in the most modest little word.

This is what renders his society so wearisome and uninteresting. Most people very naturally like to have their say and when they have listened patiently to somebody else's, feel that they are more or less entitled to express an opinion. But our friend proses and grumbles on without intermission, steadily adhering to his own pet subjects of conversation and entirely ignoring yours. Such egotism is disgusting and makes the heart contract with a sense of personal injury.

After he has told you all violence to his susceptibility, his

stable and domestic experiences, it would be a relief to mention your own, but when you enter into detail he hardly listens. This conduct is both provoking and irritating. The British sense of fair play is outraged. Whenever you meet him the same thing occurs. He is always full of himself, or else of some fresh grievance. A new one is a luxury and he does not forsake it until it is worn quite threadbare. His relations with the Hunt are somewhat strained, as can easily be imagined. He and the master are not exactly on the best of terms. The master is not to blame; for to keep the grumbling bore in a good humour is a task beyond the powers of any ordinary mortal. The greatest diplomatist could not succeed in averting an occasional storm. Those who know our friend intimately, have long since given up the attempt of pleasing him in despair, and declare he is never so happy as when finding fault. Altogether, he is far from being a cheerful companion, and the major portion of his fellow-sportsmen act with considerable discretion in giving him a wide berth, and in confining themselves to meteorological platitudes when forced for civility's sake to converse.

But the bore is an extremely dense individual, and being endowed by nature with a very thick skin does not notice fine shades of manner, or perceive when his absence is more desirable than his company. His want of sensitiveness often stands him in good stead, for not unfrequently he meets with a rebuff, which, however, he despairs to accept as such.

New-comers are to be pitied; for as a rule they fall a prey to him just like so many flies to a spider. It takes them some little time to find him out, and until that event occurs, they listen with a certain deference to his long tirades against the Hunt, the country, the master and the Hunt servants. They are even somewhat impressed at first by criticisms which seem to imply superior knowledge on the part of the critic, and look up to him as an enlightened sportsman whose oracular utterances command attention.

But this stage of hero-worship soon passes, and before long they see their quondam friend revealed in his true light. Stripped of all glamour, he appears as an inveterate grumbler and an unmitigated bore. A person to be shunned and avoided, and strongly discouraged whenever an outbreak of garrulity seems imminent.

"By Jove! here he comes," they exclaim. "For Heaven's sake, let's escape whilst there is still time." And so saying they stick spurs into their horses and gallop off as hard as they can lay legs to the ground, or else dodge round the nearest covert, or seek refuge in its muddy rides. Anywhere to avoid the inveterate grumbler, who ambles on ready to pounce upon the first victim who unwarily crosses his path.

He does not care one jot about the individual. All he wants is some target against which to rattle the small shot of his tongue.

For he dearly loves the sound of it. As for sense, humour, interest, they are utterly deficient. He strings a quantity of words together, which come dribbling out in an uninterrupted flow like water from a spout, but the stream is thin. He, however, is charmed with the result, and it never strikes him that his listener is not equally so.

For the bore is as egotistical as he is tiresome, and although there are a few people kind enough to sacrifice themselves for his benefit and who pretend to listen to his remarks, the majority of men and women are profoundly wearied by them.

For to bore modern society is the one fault most difficult to forgive, in spite of its commonness. Instinctively our spirits rise up in arms against the man whose long, prosy stories almost send us to sleep and are utterly destitute of point; stories that go rambling on for ever and ever. Dulness is an unpardonable sin, and even those who may not happen to be bright and witty themselves can appreciate these excellent qualities in others.

For humour is the salt of life. Without it, the world would be but a sorry place to dwell in. We like what is cheerful and pleasant, and whether in the hunting field or anywhere else our term on earth is too short to encourage the bores and grumbler. We cannot beguile ourselves into the belief that they are good fellows, when half-an-hour's conversation with them gives us a regular fit of the blues and makes us look at everything through a pair of black spectacles. Even if our particular Hunt *has* faults, we do not always want to hear them dinned into our ears, and above all we object to being bored.

The process is one against which human nature rises up in revolt.

### 3.—THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS NERVE.

NERVE and scent are two things equally indefinable. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow. No one knows the exact conditions on which they depend; though since the first institution of hunting, many have sought to ascertain what qualities of temperament and weather are essential to their existence. Up till now, the mystery remains a mystery, and the problem seems as far off solution as ever.

Sometimes on the most promising-looking of mornings a fox won't run a yard, turning and twisting in every direction in covert, and completely baffling his pursuers. He may be a strong old patriarch, fit to show his white-tagged brush to the whole field. But no! he declines to do anything of the sort and is viciously sworn at as an unenterprising brute. On other occasions, when, as far as it is possible to judge, the conditions do not appear nearly so favourable—when it blows a perfect hurricane, accompanied by furious storms of sleet and snow, the little red rover literally revels

in a scamper, stoutly defies the elements and leads those who have been bold enough to face them a pretty dance.

As for men, they are as deceptive as foxes every bit. A fine physique has nothing to do with nerve—at least it fails to insure its presence. You see some great, big, healthy man with rosy cheeks, the limbs of a giant, and the digestion of an ostrich, and you say to yourself, "Fortunate mortal! Surely he does not know the meaning of the word fear." But you are mistaken. He clings soberly to the roads and gates, and rarely jumps except under disagreeably high pressure. In short he objects to the process and considers it far too dangerous to be pleasant. He hunts to enjoy himself and not to commit suicide in a delicate fashion which shall afford his friends no apprehensions as to the state of his immortal soul. It is wiser policy to take care of that valuable organ on earth. So reasons the giant. On the other hand some long, lank, frail-looking individual, whose appearance certainly leads you to suppose that he has already one foot in the grave, goes like a demon, and repeatedly charges impossible fences which no living horse can clear. This fact creates but few misgivings. He is prepared every day he goes out to take innumerable falls and regards anything under half-a-dozen as quite an insignificant number, not worth talking about. For a time he goes on gaily; tumbling and picking himself up, being reprimanded by the master for constantly over-riding and periodically killing his hounds, and eliciting divided abuse, condemnation and praise from the field in general. One calls him a fool, another pronounces him a "d——d young idiot," and a third has no words to express his admiration for such magnificent courage. The majority, however, are convinced he is a madman and take a spiteful delight in prophesying that he will soon come to what they call his bearings. This generally means a desire to see him "funk"-like themselves and no longer put them to shame by his gallant deeds. The truth is, jealousy and blame are curiously allied in the minds of most people. A jealous person will generally remark severely on the doings of those he professes to despise, but in reality envies; whilst an indifferent one holds his tongue and is not put out because so-and-so has the audacity to jump right under his nose, when personally he may have the desire but not the courage to follow his example. Oddly enough, in most instances, the predictions of the malicious prove correct. Our friend *does* come to his bearings—that is to say, after riding for a time as if he bore a charmed life, the day arrives when he gets a nasty fall and hurts himself badly. He has often hurt himself before, but always slightly. On the present occasion his horse rolls heavily over him, struggles, plunges, and leaves him lying on the ground with a broken leg and several severe contusions. He suffers agonies on the homeward drive. The fly is jolty, its springs deficient and every yard of the road seems patched with stones, which increase

his pain a thousand-fold. He grows dizzy and once or twice is on the point of fainting.

Three months elapse before he is sufficiently recovered to take the saddle again. During the long weary weeks which he has been forced to spend in bed or lying full length on the sofa, his memory is haunted by the shock, the fall, and those brief but agonizing moments, when the horse rolled backwards and forwards over him and he fully expected to be killed. Impossible to wipe out the recollection. It is photographed on his brain in dark, unlovely colours, and although he would give all the world to get rid of the disagreeable impression, stamped so strongly on his mind, he can't.

The season is drawing to a close when he reappears in the hunting field, looking frightfully pale, fragile and emaciated. Every one pities him and he has a most legitimate excuse for merely hacking about and not riding as of yore. He comes out on a quiet cob expressly purchased for the purpose—a creature guaranteed not to cock its ears, whisk its tail or even blink its eye uncomfortably. Jogging sedately along the roads, or—as he gets better—popping over an occasional gap, our invalid is much astonished to find what a relief it is to be on the sick list and not expected to perform feats of valour. He feels as if a load had been removed from his shoulders, leaving him a free man, who no longer, every time he goes out hunting, is weighted by a crushing sense of obligation. For be it known, reputation is not the glittering jewel that it seems. It has its drawbacks in the hunting field as everywhere else, since fame is easier to acquire in the first instance than to sustain. A single gallant action is frequently sufficient to bring renown, but it entails a long series of efforts to prevent that action from being forgotten. Therefore a hard-rider must continually be on his mettle. There is no greater mistake than thinking, "I can rest on my laurels." Other people win fresh ones, and yours soon become old and faded if you do not exert yourself.

Meanwhile our poor young friend is conscious of a subtle alteration in his mental condition. He begins to find himself looking critically at the fences, examining their top-binders, and for the first time thinking how uncommonly wide and ugly the ditches appear. Luckily no one, not even his bosom friends, are aware of the daily increasing dread of danger growing up within his breast, like some foul and poisonous fungus. The season drags to an end, as far as he is concerned, and his fame remains untarnished. The bubble is expanding, but has not yet burst. His comrades expect nothing from him. They unite in saying, "Poor fellow! how ill he looks. He really ought not to come out hunting. If he'd only give his leg a chance, it would be all right for next season."

Alas! throughout the summer that unfortunate downfall still lingers in his thoughts. The impression, though not so acute,

refuses to fade. It rests in the background of his mind, rising to the surface whenever matters equine are discussed. Often at night he dreams of four brown heels flourishing before his eyes, and in fancy feels once more that sleek but heavy body pinning him to the ground, causing a strangely dead sensation to creep up his right leg. Nevertheless, when winter approaches, the injured limb has grown perfectly well, and he repairs as usual to his accustomed hunting quarters, trying to deceive himself into the belief that he is very keen. On the way down the country seems to him desperately blind—much more so than in ordinary seasons. The very look of it is enough to frighten one, but the strong will that in years past has carried him over so many formidable fences now resolves to keep his fears secret. Unhappy man! In spite of good resolutions he cannot succeed altogether in acting up to them.

Before long it begins to be whispered amongst his former companions of the chase—those gallant and select spirits who give prestige to every hunt—that Z—— is not going quite so hard as usual. The first man states the fact with considerable hesitation. He feels that it is equivalent to taking Z——'s character away—a kind of public confession that he has dropped from grace and retreated into the despised ranks of "*the mob!*" But the answer comes decisive from half-a-dozen pairs of stern, masculine lips. "Oh! yes, we've noticed it. We've noticed it for some time. Didn't you remark how he shirked that big bottom on the opening day, when we ran as fast as hounds could race from Crosstrees to Lockthorpe? There was no excuse. Poor Z——, I'm afraid he's settled." This half-mournfully, half-complacently. They exult in the thought that they themselves remain *unsettled*, yet inwardly wonder when their turn will come, and whether it will produce the same result.

In process of time rumours of his failing nerve reach Z——'s ears. He is frightfully annoyed by them, little guessing that they are already spread amongst all the field. Their effect is to make him feel under a cloud and to goad him to renewed exertion. For the next week or ten days he puts on a tremendous spurt, and almost rides up to his old form. But just when his nerve seems really about to improve he gets another spill, which, although unattended by any evil consequences, once more wakes the old fears into life. He cannot help it. He knows they are ridiculous, unworthy indeed of a man, but still they gain the ascendancy. Struggle as he may he fails to conquer them. They fasten on him like a tormenting creditor appearing at the most inconvenient moment.

Meanwhile his stud-groom, from whom he is particularly anxious to conceal any symptoms of degeneracy, is perfectly aware of what is taking place. One after another Z—— brings the old favourite hunters home that he has ridden for years, with the same pitiful tale. They pull, they refuse; they refuse, they pull. There is no

longer any satisfaction to be derived from them. Past virtues are swallowed up by present shortcomings, and all their good points have disappeared.

The pride of Z——'s stable is a thoroughbred chestnut mare, a beauty to look at, and perfect in every respect, at least so her master has always declared until now. He has ridden her for four seasons and, marvellous to relate, she has never put him down through her own fault. She is an extraordinary fencer, big and bold, who does not know what it is to turn her head, and her only fault when hounds run hard is a very pardonable one. She must and will be with them. This year Z—— affirms that she pulls his arms off. The fact is, he is afraid to let her go.

"It's very odd, Wilkinson," he says to his head man in tones of confidential injury, "but I can't hold Queen Bee. I don't know what's come to her. She's a different animal altogether from what she was in the early part of last season."

"Indeed, sir," responds Wilkinson diplomatically. "I'm sorry to hear that, for the mare is fit and well."

He is a man of tact, and, making a pretty shrewd guess at what is amiss, smothers a smile. Z—— is a kind master, and he has a comfortable berth.

"I tell you, Wilkinson," continues Z—— unsuspiciously, "that it's an infernally unpleasant thing going out hunting and feeling yourself being run away with at every fence."

"No doubt it is, sir. The mare hasn't done much work as yet, and perhaps she's a bit above herself. We must send her out oftener, that's all. You can ride her second 'oss on Thursday if you like. She'll have settled down by then."

"Yes, I think I will," says Z——. "After all, there's no pleasure in riding a pulling, tearing brute who never leaves you alone."

"How would it be to put a stronger bit on her, sir?" suggests Wilkinson in his most respectful and sympathetic manner.

Z—— catches at the idea.

"By all means," he replies. "I believe a stronger bit would just make all the difference."

So the next time the mare goes out orders are issued to this effect. When the day arrives, after many inward struggles, Z—— decides to ride as first horse an animal lent him on trial by a neighbouring dealer; his intention being to mount Queen Bee as soon as she has quieted down a bit. Owing to a mistake on the part of the mare's strapper, she is sent to the meet with her ordinary bridle, whilst about half a ton of steel is placed in the mouth of the stranger. Fortunately Z—— knows nothing of this, and when he gets on the mare, being under the impression that she is restrained by a powerful lever against which she finds it impossible to pull, allows her to stride along at her will, with the result of holding her perfectly easily.

"Well, sir; how have you got on?" inquires Wilkinson curiously when his master comes riding in to the stable yard.

"First rate. I never was better carried in my life. Queen Bee is quite in her old form."

"Come, that's all right," answers the gratified Wilkinson, going to the mare's head while Z—— dismounts.

In the twinkling of an eye he perceives that his orders have not been carried out regarding the bit. He deserves great credit, for, in this delicate situation, he has the extreme good sense to refrain from mentioning the circumstance.

"Did she pull you at all, sir?" he asks, looking as sober as a judge.

"No, not an ounce. Remember, Wilkinson, always to put that bit on to Queen Bee in future. It suits her down to the ground."

"Yes, sir," says Wilkinson; but as his master walks away he shakes his head and looks after him with a regretful sigh. "Ah!" he soliloquizes, "I've had my suspicions for a long time, but now the whole thing is as clear as the nose on one's face. The mare's no more in fault nor me. What we wants this season is what we had a little too much of afore the guvnor got that unlucky spill and broke his leg. He's a-losing of his nerve, more's the pity—more's the pity, for at one time a gallanter gentleman never went out hunting, though every now and again he *was* a little too rough on his 'osses." So saying Wilkinson delivered the beautiful Queen Bee to her particular strapper, whilst he hurried off to personally superintend the mixing of her gruel.

Another person who quickly learns poor Z——'s secret is the dealer with whom he is accustomed to deal. In olden days never was a customer so easy to satisfy. If only horses could gallop Z—— soon taught them to jump. It was as if he infused into their hearts something of his own gallant spirit. But now it is almost impossible to suit him. He has grown fastidious to a degree. The real truth is, he hardly knows what he wants, or rather he wants so much that no single animal can combine all the requisite qualities. It must gallop, it must jump, it must stay, be smooth in its paces, have perfect manners, neither kick, buck, nor do anything disagreeable, whilst its age shall not be less than five or more than seven.

Meanwhile poor Z—— has such a nervous horror of riding a new horse, that he will not try one sufficiently to discover its merits. On the other hand, he grows sharper and sharper at finding out all demerits. If the animal goes boldly at his fences, he calls him a rushing, tearing brute; if after being pulled up, he declines to jump, Z—— declares he is a rank refuser, and if the steady-going beast is so docile as to take no notice of the electric current of fear, communicated from his rider's hands to the corners of his sensitive mouth, he is dubbed either a sluggard or a cur. In short, Z—— wants a wonder. A few exist, but they are very hard to find, and

even money cannot purchase them the very moment they are wanted.

Z—— requires his ideal hunter to be fleet as the wind, yet not to pull an ounce; bold as a lion, yet to go lamb-like at his fences, and to possess a courageous and generous nature, which, however, indulges in no inconvenient light-heartedness. Where is such a horse to be found? Z—— chops and changes, with the result that he outwears the dealer's patience, and at the end is decidedly worse off, both in money and horseflesh, than he was at the beginning. His friendly dealer does his best to please him. No efforts are wanting on his part, for Z—— has not only been a good customer for many years, but also a first-rate advertisement. Indirectly he has put many hundred pounds into his pocket. He begins by sending him sound fresh young horses of the class he has bought up till now. They certainly require a little making, but hitherto Z—— has never failed to turn them into brilliant hunters. Next, he tries him with something older and steadier, without giving any greater satisfaction; and at last, in despair, falls back upon a regular old gentleman's quadruped, strong, plain, underbred, but guaranteed absolutely sober of conduct. A year ago Z—— would not have had such a hippopotamus at a gift. He might have called him an ornament to an omnibus, but certainly not to the hunting field. Now he declares him to be a really comfortable mount, and eventually purchases old Sobersides for a sum about three times his worth.

So Z—— goes on from bad to worse. Every year his nerve becomes shakier, until at last he almost gives up jumping altogether. The process is subtle, but he traces its commencement to that disastrous fall, which to this day he has never forgotten. Ten years from the time he first entered the county and took field, master, huntsman by storm, he is reduced to the necessity of being accompanied by a groom, whose duty it is to precede his master over every gap, and prove to him by ocular demonstration that it contains no lurking danger.

Shall we give a final view of poor Z——?

One day, when hounds were running very hard, he came across a diminutive ditch. The fence had almost completely disappeared owing to the number of horses which had passed over it. Z—— happened to be at the very tail of an attenuated line of sportsmen, for the pace was great, and many steeds had succumbed to it.

"Hey!" he called out to his groom, who was a little behind, "you go first, and give me a lead."

The man did as desired, and waited for his master to follow. Whereupon Z—— took a tremendous pull at the reins, leant timorously forward in the saddle, hunched his shoulders, rounded his back, and in fear and trembling set his horse at the gap. That sagacious animal, however, probably possessing a delicate perception of his rider's frame of mind, refused. Z—— pretended to

whack him—he was in much too great a fright to do so really—but Sobersides opposed the castigation, light as it was, with dogged obstinacy. The fact was, Z—— had got hold of him so tight by the head, that he could not see where he was going. Then Z—— vented his wrath upon the human animal. It was considerably safer, and did not expose him to the risk of being unseated.

"Here, you d—d fool," he exclaimed irritably to his groom, "what's the good of standing there grinning, just as if there were anything to grin at? Come, jump back again, and get on this brute of mine, whilst I mount Patrician."

The man immediately obeyed orders, and lo! to Z——'s surprise, Sobersides popped over the gap without demur.

But now, what had come to Patrician? The horse seemed to have taken leave of his senses, for he proved even more refractory than Sobersides. He not only firmly declined to jump, but got up on his hind legs and showed the most abominable temper. It was more than Z—— could stand. Every moment he thought he should be crushed to death. At the first lull, he slipped from the saddle in a desperate hurry.

"What the devil is the matter with the brute?" he asked indignantly of the groom, who promptly rejoined his master.

"I think if you would give 'im 'is 'ead, sir," suggested the man. "'Ee's a 'oss as likes to go very free at his fences."

"Give him his head! What do you mean? He might have jumped over and over again had he liked. Do you suppose I don't know when a horse shows temper? To-morrow morning he shall be packed off to the place he came from."

"It's a'most a pity, sir. 'Ee's a good 'oss, a very good 'oss. If you'd try 'im again——"

"Try him again. Not I. Not for ten thousand pounds. I've had enough of the beast. The fact is, he ain't my sort."

Whether our friend Z—— ever succeeded in getting over that gap, history does not tell, but when his mortified companion reached home, he lost no time in communicating the humiliating tale to Wilkinson.

That worthy pursed up his lips.

"Look here, John," he said, "don't you put yourself about. It isn't your fault, or Patrician's either, we all know that. He's as good a hunter as ever looked through a bridle, but when a gentleman 'as lost his nerve as completely as our guvnor, why, then, in my hopinion, it's time for him to give up hunting. It's first this one wrong, then that, until I declare a man has no pride left in his 'osses. I'm a plain, 'ard-working fellow, but if I could present my master with ten pound worth of nerve-powder, why, I'd do it to-morrow."

And now the question comes, why does courage evaporate with some, whilst others may hunt and tumble to the end of a long life, and never lose their nerve?

Z—— is not to be sneered at. He was not responsible for the change that took place within him, and for a long time valiantly battled with his fears. That eventually he succumbed to them was his misfortune rather than his fault. No "funkstick" he, from birth, yet in some mysterious fashion a single nasty accident threw his whole nervous system out of gear. The inquiring mind cries out, "Why, why? Oh! give me the reason?"

But answer there is none. Only we agree with Wilkinson, that when a man has lost his nerve so completely as Z——, it is wiser for him to retire from the chase. There is no greater mistake than letting what ought to be pleasure degenerate into pain, and submitting to the yoke, simply through force of habit. Say boldly, "My nerve is gone. I'm giving up hunting," and nobody will care in the least. There are always plenty to take your place.

THE END.

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## OH, TO BE A MAN!

By HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA."

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MISS HANNAH STEPTOE was a prim little old maid, with a flat, round ruddy face and dark brown hair neatly fastened behind in a little knot. She invariably dressed in grey silk or satin, wore a gold brooch containing a lock of white hair, and was very particular about her caps—curious compounds of ribbon and muslin and lace, which varied from the severe turban in the morning to the last new fashion from Paris in the evening. These caps wrought a remarkable change in her appearance; she seemed to grow younger as the day advanced, so that the question of her age was often debated by the gossiping inhabitants of Dullish, the small and dreary watering-place in which she had made her home.

She lived with a confidential old servant in a little cottage facing a triangular green. Roses were carefully trailed over the wooden porch; the path through the tiny garden was bordered with white pebbles; the flower-beds were cut with mathematical precision; in short, the outside of the cottage clearly indicated the orderly habits that prevailed within. Nothing ever went wrong there. Doors opened and shut without creaking; hot mutton punctually at one o'clock on Sundays was followed by cold mutton punctually at one o'clock on Mondays; the muffins were done to a turn on Thursdays, when a few friends always came to afternoon tea; habit had worn for itself deep grooves, and everything ran smoothly and undeviatingly along them.

When any Sunday-school teacher wanted a model of commonplace propriety for the example of her pupils, she was sure to select Miss Hannah Steptoe. No one would have dreamed of suspecting the slightest tinge of romance in this quiet little lady.

And yet, so inconsistent is human nature, she had set her affections upon a man much younger than herself, while her life was haunted by the dark desire to see the world as it really is, and not as it was presented to her and her set of highly respectable friends, all of whom stood upon the neat and narrow platform of conventionality and never ventured to look over the edge. She

longed to do what they dared not. The placid smile that sometimes lighted up her face, as she sat in the arm-chair before the fire and watched her cat sleeping on the hearthrug, was caused, not by a pleasant retrospect which affords enjoyment to so many old ladies, but by a fanciful picture of her friends' feelings as they believed her plunging into some wild extravagance.

Certain persons of undoubted piety, John Wesley among them, are said to have been beset by a horrible and almost irresistible temptation to do something outrageous. The temptation that beset Miss Steptoe was somewhat similar in degree, though different in kind. "Oh, to be a man!" was the thought that continually rose to her lips but never escaped them. It was more than feminine curiosity; it was almost a mania with her, cleverly as she concealed it. Perhaps, after all, the very stiffness of manner and habit, which was supposed to be her leading characteristic, was but an extreme precaution against her besetting temptation.

"Oh, to be a man!" The thought was no sooner driven from her mind than it was back again, often bursting upon her at the most incongruous times, when she was making a pudding or knitting a stocking. But the day came when, with dazzled eyes, she saw a way to the attainment of a wish which she had always regarded as unattainable.

Late one autumn there arrived in Dullish a mesmerist, who called himself Professor Sobrinski. In spite of his name he spoke English with a very good accent. He was a tall, thin, sallow-faced man with an enormous nose and cold snake-like eyes. Possessed of a fund of grim humour he regarded human nature as a plaything, and was never so pleased as when trying the effect of a round block in a square hole. It was doubtless this propensity that had led him to adopt mesmerism as a means of livelihood.

A successful *séance* in the town hall brought Professor Sobrinski into notice. At first his vocation as a public performer—a sort of play-actor, in fact—was decidedly against him, but somebody started the story that he was a Polish count, whereupon he became quite the rage in Dullish. He was invited to dinners, teas and suppers, and at all of them was expected to give illustrations of his art gratuitously. This he did, revenging himself by making fools of his host and hostess.

Among the professor's warmest admirers was Miss Hannah Steptoe. In the crowd that used to gather round him she always occupied a prominent place; her prim little figure rigid, her daintily-attired head held on one side as she hung upon his every word. She had conceived a most fantastic idea of the powers of mesmerism. By its aid, it seemed to her, the transmigration of souls was brought within the range of possibility, if not of accomplished facts. Glowing with excitement, she hatched a little plot based upon this conclusion. She invited to a cosy afternoon tea a few friends, including the professor and Captain

Henniker, a tall, handsome, indolent man with a big moustache, which had captivated all the young ladies in Dullish—and Miss Hannah Steptoe. But it was not solely the moustache that had wrought the mischief in her case. The captain, in spite of his drawling tones, and eyes which were seldom really open, was reputed to have seen more of the world than most people of double the age. This alone would be quite enough to explain her secret admiration of him.

The preparations for her entertainment were prodigious. Never was there such a baking of cakes and toasting of muffins and washing of quaint little cups and saucers. The kettle was unusually tedious, and when the tea was made the solemn servant terrified her mistress with the suggestion that the water had never boiled after all. With awed faces they peered into the splendid silver teapot, which was reserved for state occasions, and when they beheld several leaves floating on the surface, their expressions were most tragic.

"Martha, this is too dreadful," exclaimed Miss Steptoe, with uplifted hands.

"Yes, ma'am, it is," replied Martha. "I've never known the like happen in our house before—no, never."

It was some time before Miss Steptoe recovered from the shock. Her domestic duties imposed such a strain upon her that she almost forgot the excitement of her plot. But when, attired in her best grey silk and daintiest cap, she sat down to await the coming of her guests she was all a tremble.

Her manner, when receiving them, was marked by extreme nervousness, but no one, looking at that prim little lady, would have attributed the cause to anything more extraordinary than a catastrophe in the kitchen. When she had poured out the tea and Martha had handed round the cakes and muffins and retired, she lost no time in coming to the point.

"Wouldn't it be very nice and interesting, you know, Professor Sobrinski," she said to that distinguished foreigner, whose big nose, hovering over his cup, resembled the beak of a bird, "to carry mesmerism a little further than you do?"

A breathless silence fell upon all, for the professor was about to speak. Every eye was eagerly bent upon him as he set down his cup. The only person who saw any humour in the situation was himself, and he was too clever to show it.

"In what way?" he asked.

"Well," replied Miss Steptoe, "your subjects can't resist the power of your will, can they?"

"No, Miss Steptoe."

"You can make them do precisely what you like. You can even separate soul from body."

"Just so," assented the professor.

"Then why not make somebody's spirit enter somebody else's

body? A sort of temporary exchange, you know, and then each would have the thoughts and feelings of the other. Wouldn't such an experiment tend to more brotherly love? I mean, by enabling us to see things from different standpoints."

"No doubt," said the professor smiling, though the glitter in his eyes was anything but pleasant. "Upon whom, Miss Steptoe, do you wish me to experiment?"

As she glanced round the silent circle gathered before the fire, there was a very general shrinking. The ladies cowered behind their tea-cups, and several of the gentlemen standing in the background were mean enough to hide behind their neighbours.

"Well," said Miss Steptoe with resignation, "if it will serve the interests of science, I don't mind offering myself."

By this time the ladies were thoroughly frightened, and several began to remonstrate. But Professor Sobrinski took no notice of them.

"Who else?" he asked.

"Captain Henniker, won't you?" timidly said Miss Steptoe, after a pause. "A soldier oughtn't to be afraid, you know. Won't you join me in the sacred cause of science?"

"With pleasure," he drawled, bowing from a chair opposite. "Only too happy to oblige a lady. But no larks, professor! You must let me get back to myself, or it might be awkward for Miss Steptoe. I wouldn't inconvenience her for the world."

"My experiments never fail," said the professor; "pray let us begin at once."

He proceeded in the usual way, making each of his subjects gaze fixedly at a coin held in such a position as to throw a strain upon the eyes. The spectators watched the operation with some curiosity and no little trepidation, not a word being spoken by any of them. It was the professor, and not his subjects, who riveted their attention. There was a strange fascination about his glittering eyes, and as the flickering firelight fell upon his tall figure and sallow birdlike face and hovering hands, he reminded many of a vulture.

Captain Henniker, though at first a trifle restive, eventually fell under the magician's spell. Miss Steptoe succumbed at once. When Professor Sobrinski examined their eyes, he found that both his subjects were thoroughly under the mesmeric influence. Then he smiled grimly, just as he had smiled before.

"So far, so good," he said; "now for the next stage." He fluttered his fingers in front of Captain Henniker. "Remember you are Miss Steptoe." He turned and repeated the gesture before her. "And you are Captain Henniker."

With a singularly sly expression she looked up at him and said, "No larks, professor."

The gentlemen fairly shrieked with laughter, the speech was so unexpected. Their merriment was increased by the ridiculous

appearance of Captain Henniker. With his hands folded over his knees, he wore an air of mild reproof, just such an air as Miss Steptoe would ordinarily have worn under the same circumstances.

All this time she had been fidgeting in her chair. As nobody spoke, all waiting for what was coming next, she rose impatiently, saying :

" You people are so uncommonly dull that I really can't stand this any longer—I'm off."

" Where to ? " asked Professor Sobrinski, the only one who was able to speak.

" For a spree. Bother these old maids ! they are enough to drive one crazy."

Her words threw a sudden stiffness into the attitudes of the ladies present. They positively glared after her, as, with her little nose high in the air, she walked to the door.

Captain Henniker almost dropped from his seat, he was so dismayed. Like her, he was only obeying an irresistible power, for he had full possession of his own identity. He knew what an ass he was making of himself, but he could not act otherwise, hard though he tried to do so. And now that Miss Steptoe was going out he was filled with horror, for how in her absence could he regain control over himself ? Yet her womanly bashfulness and other characteristics having been impressed upon him, he could not utter one word to stop her. " There she goes with my spirit," he said to himself, shuddering. And when the door closed upon her, this careless soldier with the big moustache actually began to weep.

Miss Steptoe went upstairs to her room and, with the speed and inattention of a man, put on her mantle and bonnet. There was no lingering at the glass, no searching for stray ribbons, no final pluming of feathers. In a wonderfully short space of time she was out of the house and on her way to the Parade.

Mr. Macnish, a pompous little man, who would have been startled to learn that he was a butt for every joker in Dullish, happened to be swaggering along in front of her. She stepped up to him and slapped him on the back.

" Well, old chappie, where are you off to ? " demanded this astonishing little lady.

When Mr. Macnish recognized Miss Steptoe he nearly had an apoplectic fit.

" Oh, you wag ! " she exclaimed, pointing at him.

" Good gracious ! " gasped Mr. Macnish, falling back in alarm.

" Ta-ta, " laughed Miss Steptoe, " I'm bound for the Parade. You are not going my way, I suppose ? "

Mr. Macnish, with very shaky knees, stood staring after her. " The woman's mad, " he said at last. " There can be no doubt about it. " Then he turned and made for her cottage as fast as his legs could carry him.

Here another surprise awaited him. Martha, who did not know

that her mistress had gone out, told him there were a number of visitors in the drawing-room, should she show him in? "Yes," he replied in bewilderment; and entered, peering about like a traveller arrived at dead of night in a strange land. He found Professor Sobrinski speaking to an entranced audience, but his arrival caused a general flutter. His extraordinary story created much amusement, and while the mystery was being explained to him there was a good deal of laughter.

"Poor thing," exclaimed Mr. Macnish, "she shouldn't have been allowed out; I call it an abominable practical joke."

"My good sir," said Professor Sobrinski, "you speak too fast. It was Miss Steptoe herself who proposed the experiment. She has sacrificed herself in the cause of science."

"Science be hanged," cried Mr. Macnish, "I am going after her." Captain Henniker rose eagerly.

"Allow me," he said. "I ought to have kept near her. I feel dreadfully ill apart from her. If you will all be good enough to excuse me, I will go after her." He looked doubtfully at Professor Sobrinski.

"You may go," said the professor.

Captain Henniker bowed and left the room. He felt obliged to proceed slowly and sedately, eager as he was to regain the society of Miss Steptoe. Besides his anxiety to recover that part of himself with which he believed she had walked off, her spirit was working within him, and while he shrank from the contemplated act, he was irresistibly impelled to make a declaration of love. "What a dolt I am," he kept saying to himself as he went towards the Parade; "I don't care a straw about the old frump, and yet—I love you to distraction, my darling. There, was there ever such a horrible position! The words will come out, but they are not my words."

Grassy banks, thinly planted with shrubs, sloped down to the Parade, a converted park by the side of the sea. A few lamps twinkled along the edge of the beach; they had just been lighted when Captain Henniker arrived. The breeze being chilly he was surprised to see a good many people walking about, while a few occupied seats near the little circular erection where the band played in the evening. In the distance was a prim little figure sauntering along as if the whole place belonged to her. She stopped and spoke to nearly everybody she met, and as she passed on again they gazed after her in speechless amusement. Miss Hannah Steptoe they knew; but who was this eccentric person who assumed her guise and then startled them with the most extraordinary speeches and gestures? They gathered in groups and pointed after her. There was quite a commotion upon the Parade.

If there was one thing more than another that Captain Henniker abhorred it was being mixed up in a scene. He shuddered at the

very idea of making himself ridiculous, and yet he went after Miss Steptoe, and, though struggling against what he was compelled to do, entered into conversation with her, and walked by her side. The curious spectator observed that she dropped her flippant manner at once, but they did not know what had caused the change. They could not help, however, being struck with Captain Henniker's respectful attitude.

"I very much wanted to see you alone," he said, "so I have taken the liberty of following you. You can guess what I am going to say, can't you?"

"How should I?"

"Oh, my darling, how I love you! You know it, don't you? You have known it all along. Do you love me?"

"I do," she answered softly.

"Then," cried this miserable puppet, "I am the happiest man in the world."

He stretched out his arms towards her. As he did so, a peal of laughter reached his ears, and proved stronger than the spell. He started back, shivering.

"This place is frightfully public," he said; "let us get away from it."

A pompous little man came tearing along the Parade. He waved his stick, and was evidently in a tremendous passion. It was Mr. Macnish.

"Captain Henniker," he cried, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are making Miss Steptoe the talk of the whole town."

"Not me," stammered Captain Henniker.

"But you are, sir. Pray," said Mr. Macnish, turning to Miss Steptoe, "let me see you home. The air is keen here."

To Captain Henniker's surprise, she went quite meekly. She did not utter a word of remonstrance; she did not even look back. He had yet much to learn of Professor Sobrinski's power over his subjects.

When Captain Henniker awoke next morning he was painfully conscious of what had happened on the previous day. There could be no doubt he was in a very awkward predicament, and he could see no way out of it. In despair he sent his servant to ask his friend and confidant, Leonard Haughton, to come to breakfast. Haughton accepted the invitation, but was rather late in arriving.

"I say, old boy," he began, "you look precious seedy. Did Miss Steptoe's tea disagree with you?"

"I hate a fool," said Captain Henniker testily. "Sit down and help yourself."

"Bilious, eh?" said Haughton with a smile. "Well, perhaps it's not to be wondered at. Thank goodness, my appetite will make amends for yours."

He helped himself largely, and for a time breakfast proceeded

in silence ; but presently Captain Henniker threw down his knife and fork, and said :

" Look here, Leonard, I'm in a most frightful mess. It makes my hair stand on end when I think of it. How I can have been such a fool I can't conceive. I allowed that viper Sobrinski to mesmerise me, and then I became Miss Steptoe and she became me. Do you follow me ? "

" Not exactly," answered Haughton drily. " But go on."

" Well, Miss Steptoe—that was me, you know—walked off to the Parade, and left me—that was Miss Steptoe—behind, and after a while, I—or, rather, Miss Steptoe—followed her—that was me. It sounds funny, doesn't it ? "

" Very."

" Then I, like an ass—though I couldn't help it—proposed to Miss Steptoe. But, you understand, it was really Miss Steptoe who proposed."

" In other words, Miss Steptoe proposed to herself."

" Nonsense, man. I'll put it more plainly for you. The spirit of Miss Steptoe in my body proposed to my spirit in her body."

" Was the spirit whisky or gin ? Upon my word, Henuiker, you are not sober yet. Who proposed to whom ? "

" That is just what I can't make out. It seemed as if I was proposing to her, but it was she who proposed to me. How do I stand ? That is what I want you to tell me."

" Give it up," answered Haughton. " Never was good at riddles."

" Do be sensible for a moment. Am I bound by the proposal ? "

" I should say you were. When a fellow takes too much—shall we call it tea ?—over-night, he must expect to answer for it in the morning."

" Then," said Captain Henniker desperately, " the proposal must be repeated by me. Say good-bye to your old friend, Leonard. I feel as if I should cut my throat."

That afternoon he called at Miss Steptoe's cottage, in order to ratify what had occurred between them. It was, he considered, the only honourable course open to him, and therefore he had resolved to take it, though the spell itself had ceased to operate. It seemed as if its hateful effects were to last a lifetime, compelling him to do what he detested, and leaving him no more control over his own destiny than is possessed by chaff driven by the wind.

Martha opened the door to him. With a face brimful of importance, she said, before he had time to speak :

" Have you heard the news, Captain Henniker ? "

" News ! " he gasped, fearing that he knew it only too well.

" Miss Steptoe is engaged to Mr. Macnish."

He scarcely knew how he made his escape ; he was at once so astonished and so delighted. It was not until afterwards, when

he was able to think more clearly, that a slight feeling of soreness entered his mind. It was rather humiliating to be rejected in favour of Mr. Macnish. He could not conceive how it had happened. Any woman could have told him. But Captain Henniker thought it prudent not to ask.

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## A DAY OF ADVENTURE ON THE NILE.

By MRS. BLOOD.

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**I**N the spring of the year '74, I was descending the Nile in a dahabeeyah, having ascended it a few months previously as far as the Second Cataract at Wady Halfah. In those distant days, Nile travelling was very different to what it is now. Steamers, even those of the ubiquitous and "personally conducting" Mr. Cook, were comparatively few and far between; and one might go many days on the upper reaches of the river without seeing any white faces, except those of one's own party, or any lateen sail except the gigantic one that adorned one's own boat. No time was wasted on introductions in those days. If one was lucky enough to "tie up" anywhere near a European boat, no time was lost in making acquaintance, and the visit was as promptly returned as if the two dahabeeyahs contained the reigning sovereigns of rival countries. It made a pleasant break in the long days of sailing or towing to get a chance of hearing a "white language," and above all perhaps to exchange newspapers and over-read novels; for one very soon gets to the bottom of any supply of books with which one may start on a Nile voyage.

However, to return to those oft-quoted muttons. We were, as I have said, returning down the river, and returning considerably more slowly than we wished, for we had to be, for family reasons, at Cairo by a certain date. But family reasons or any reasons mattered not in the eyes of our Reis and sailors. They were paid by the month, and they therefore desired to keep us as long on the river as they possibly could. No excuse was too meagre for a delay; and the way the Reis and the steersman combined to run the boat on sand-banks was quite remarkable. It really seemed as if we were bound to make a personal experience and survey of every sand-bank in the river! The "stars in their courses," or rather the winds, seemed also to fight against us. Every day the north wind arose in its strength and fought out a sturdy battle, during which our boat had to be tied up against the Nile stream till sundown, when it gradually died away. The nights being calm and windless, the men should then have rowed and profited by the swift current; and so they did, until our lights were put out and every one in bed and asleep. Then the oars would be

silently shipped, the boat made fast to the bank, and the crew, rolled into shapeless bundles in their blankets, would speedily consign themselves to their slumbers, confident that the *Hawaji* were none the wiser.

Altogether it was rather weary work, fighting perpetually against either crew or wind, and sometimes both. We varied the tedium of the enforced idleness of the anchorage during the greater part of the day, by exploring on foot the neighbourhood of our prisons. At that time of year, March or April, it is the only way of seeing anything of the country, for the river has already sunk so far down the high clay banks that one can see nothing from the boat. Between Thebes and Keneh, the part we were going through that March, the country was very rich and beautiful; a great fertile tract of green cultivated land shut in at a considerable distance by the desert and the mountains. There were lovely inclosures of fruit trees, lemon trees, covered with blossom, date palms, dōm palms and prickly pears; and on one occasion we saw a fine vineyard, which is a rare sight in Egypt. Everywhere the *shadoof* was being worked by magnificent bronze figures, or the *sakiyah* by a couple of oxen in charge of a little brown child, who was perched like an imp on the shaft of the great wheel. It is this never-failing system of irrigation which takes the place of the annual inundation when the Nile is falling, and makes what would otherwise be a desert "to blossom like the rose."

One morning we found ourselves, after a calm night, during which we had been tied up as usual, some miles above Keneh; the Reis said four or five. Subsequent events proved the distance to be ten or twelve. We tried to set out, but needless to say the wind had the start of us, and after a vain attempt to battle against it, we gave in and the dahabeeyah was again tied up under the high overhanging bank of clay. These banks, by-the-by, are sometimes exceedingly dangerous neighbours to dahabeeyahs. The current eats out the crumbly, friable earth as the river falls, and occasionally when the top weight is too much, tons of clay may fall without any sort of warning on a dahabeeyah that has been unwise enough to tie up underneath. When the banks retreat slightly and are grassy, there is no danger. Believing the assurance of the Reis as to the distance to Keneh, and not appreciating the prospect of waiting under the clay cliff till the wind abated, we determined to set out in the little boat or *sandal* (a name which must surely be the root of that of the Venetian skiff or *sandolo*) to row to Keneh and from there cross the river to the temple of Denderah on the western bank, and thus utilize our day instead of wasting it in vain imprecations on Boreas. We also hoped that the dahabeeyah would be able to accomplish so short a distance and be at Keneh by the time we had ended our expedition to the temple. But in all this we reckoned without our host, for after battling for about twenty minutes or half-an-hour against the

boisterous wind, we found that our two rowers made but little way against it ; and it was so bitterly cold that my husband and I landed with Ali, the dragoman, to walk the distance to Keneh. The rest of the party remained in the boat, waiting to take advantage of every lull in the wind.

Ali soon left us to hurry on to the town and order our donkeys for the Denderah expedition. Remembering the dictum of the Reis as regards the "four or five miles," we raised no objection to his departure. Anything more unpleasant than the remainder of that walk it would be hard to find. The dust-storm came full upon us over that flat country, buffeting us, blinding us, choking us, until we could very nearly neither breathe nor see. Sometimes we crouched behind a mud-bank to let the worst gusts of wind and the pillars of dust, which whirled after each other across the plain, pass us by. Presently we came upon a miserable little village, a range of straggling huts along the pathway, of which the chief inhabitants were a pack of snarling, aggressive curs ; and there are few more unpleasant beasts to encounter than an Egyptian village dog. To avoid these demonstrative animals, we left the path, which was somewhat inland, and tried to skirt along the river bank. This was leaving the frying-pan for the fire ; instead of being attacked by dogs, we were now attacked by men, the owners of the gardens of cucumbers and gourds along which we were skirting ; and matters might have become serious, in the absence of a common language of explanation, only for the never-failing one of coin, which in its usual capacity of oil on the troubled waters, smoothed the tempers of our aggressors with wonderful rapidity. We were allowed to go on our journey, after having bought enough cucumbers to fill our pockets. On and on we walked, the miles lengthening as we went ; weary, storm-buffeted and foot-sore, we still kept on till we reached Keneh, or rather the landing-place, the town itself lying some little way inland. Here we were only too glad to take refuge in the boat, which had at last overtaken us, and rest in it till Ali arrived from the town, the centre of a shrieking band of donkey-boys and their attendant animals. Having, at the risk of limb and tympanum, chosen our patient steeds, we mounted and rode about two miles lower down stream to the great ferry-boat, for it was too rough to attempt to cross the river in the *sandal*. It was as well in any case that we did not attempt it, for even in the great ferry-boat we were astonished at the time it took us to cross. Not to trust to one's eyesight in judging distances is one of the first lessons one should learn in the deceptive Egyptian atmosphere. Our donkeys were huddled together with the donkey-boys in the bottom of the ferry-boat, while we sat cross-legged on the Turkey carpet which always accompanied us on our expeditions, and which Ali had spread on the raised part of the boat at the stern.

Mounting our donkeys again, we rode to Denderah, which is

something less than a mile from the river bank; and a most interesting temple it is, more for its superior state of preservation than for the beauty or artistic merit of its sculptures, which, however, have been unmercifully chipped and knocked about, even the greater part of the capitals of the columns not escaping. But it certainly is most instructive and interesting to find a temple where all the halls, courts and chambers are architecturally in perfect preservation. The roof alone is a marvel; built of enormous blocks, or rather rocks, of stone, which give one an extraordinary idea of the strength of the walls and foundations which can support such tons of weight throughout the centuries since the days of Ptolemy XI., when the temple was begun, and those of Tiberius and Nero, when it was ended. On the ceiling of the portico we noticed the famous zodiac, over which the savants and Egyptologists had so many exhilarating quarrels, until the Greek inscription which had been overlooked, and the hieroglyphical names of the Cesars on the exterior and interior walls, gave the clue to the problem, and reduced the probable date of this zodiac to a much later epoch than many had been willing to ascribe it. There are only three of these zodiacs as yet discovered in Egypt, at Denderah, Esneh, and El Dayr, and all three are ascribed to Ptolemaic or Roman times. It is worthy of remark that in the zodiacs of Denderah and Esneh, the sign "Cancer" is represented by the native scarabeus instead of the crab; and "Sagittarius," portrayed in the form of a centaur, undoubtedly betrays a Greek origin. On the abacus of the columns of the portico are charming tablets of a goddess suckling Horus. The main building is dedicated to Athor (or Venus), and on the architrave of the portico is a procession in honour of the goddess, in which we noticed two figures, one playing the harp and another the tambourine.

On the roof of the temple are two small chambers dedicated to Osiris, in which are some most interesting sculptures of Osiris dead and mummified. Many of the chambers of the great temple have very curious roofs, but the whole place seemed cold, dirty and neglected, and very different from the well-cared for aspect of Edfou. However, the architectural interest was, as I have said, very great, and we occupied ourselves exploring the many great halls and chambers, even to the Holy of Holies at the west end of the temple (the farthest from the portico and entrance), where, in a niche in the wall, which the king alone was allowed to enter, it is said was preserved the mysterious emblem of the great goddess Athor, a golden *sistrum*. Another interesting relic of another goddess of beauty is to be seen carved on one of the outside walls, i.e., the portrait of the "Serpent of old Nile," the glorious Cleopatra herself. Whether it is simply an imaginary representation of the great Egyptian queen, executed by some contemporary artist who had never seen her, of course cannot be known; but this seemed to me a most likely interpretation of the fact that

neither in face nor figure does the so-called portrait give the smallest idea of the world-famous beauty.

As we rode away from the temple, we passed a camel with her foal, which presented a strange contrast to each other; the mother, an incarnation of patient, grave solemnity and profound contempt of mankind, the foal frolicking in and out amongst our donkeys, kicking up its heels at every moment through sheer lightheartedness, and evidently finding the world by no means a bad place. Poor little beast! like the young bears "his troubles were all to come," for he was only fifteen days old, though from his size I should have thought him a good deal older. These home-bred camels are more valuable in Egypt than those imported from the Soudan, owing to their acclimatization. When we were in Nubia, we saw the arrival of a flock of camels from the Soudan crossing the river at Korosko. They were then only worth forty francs apiece, but after a year's acclimatization in Egypt they would fetch two hundred francs each. The little camel at Denderah (who was nearly white and very woolly) would therefore be worth, when full grown, even more than an imported camel.

When we got to the Nile on our way back from Denderah, we found the storm just as high as ever, and as there was not the least hope of the dahabeeyah having been able to make any way against it, Ali had wisely engaged a native boat in which to sail up stream to our floating home. As Ali had many necessary purchases to make at Keneh, we first sailed across the river, and put him and my son ashore, to make their way inland to the town. Keneh is the nearest point on the Nile to the Red Sea, for the river here takes a bend to the east, which brings Kosseir, on the Red Sea littoral, within less than a hundred and twenty miles, an easy marching distance. There is, therefore, a considerable amount of trade with Arabia, and at Keneh one can buy little drums packed with peculiarly rich and luscious Arabian dates, Mocha coffee and fine tobacco. To all these dainties, our party being of various ages and tastes, we did much incline, and Ali was therefore commissioned to bring us a supply. Having thus left two of our party on shore, we sailed for the dahabeeyah. The wind was high, the water very rough, and the evening bitterly cold. The sand-banks (those curses to Nile navigation!) were so numerous that we had to tack back and forwards across the river, and as we had no ballast on board, the process was by no means devoid of danger. Some of the sand-banks were covered with dense masses of flamingoes and other kinds of cranes. We were more than two hours getting back, in spite of having the wind with us, and it was nearly nine o'clock when we at last reached the dahabeeyah, having had some difficulty in the darkness in making out her position under the high bank. We should not have found her at all, but that she had some lights showing, though not the proper lantern at her masthead. It was clear that ~~dahab~~ah, which is

sailing before a high wind for two hours, we must at least have done twelve miles; the distance we had been beguiled into walking in the morning. It was pleasant to be on board again after our most unpleasant sail, and we went to dinner, hoping that my son and Ali would appear before it was over; as they had settled to ride back, we almost expected them to have arrived before we did. But dinner passed, and hour after hour followed, and still no boy and no dragoman. Then began all sorts of suppositions, one more disquieting than the other. They might have been mad enough to risk returning in the *sandal*, which had been left at Keneh, in which case they must have been infallibly upset on a sand-bank in the storm and darkness. To attempt to go down stream to look for them before daylight was utterly hopeless. The prospects of the land journey, as viewed by the pessimistic Reis, were hardly more hopeful. The villagers were "bad men," he said, and indeed we could hardly contradict him after our morning's experiences, and the travellers might have been stopped and robbed. He further added that he had sent the two Keneh men amongst the sailors out to search, and that it was no use sending any of the others, as they did not know the country and would not know the way in any direction; and the men backed up the latter assertion by flatly refusing to venture out of the boat. The gale of the morning had become a storm at night. The darkness was, perhaps not unnaturally, "Egyptian darkness that might be felt;" one could not see a yard before one. The only thing to do was to wait for the return of the Keneh men, whom the Reis declared he had sent to search for the lost travellers. It was not long before we found that this was but a further proof of the endless mendacity one encounters in Egypt. The two Keneh sailors had left the dahabeeyah early in the morning after our own departure, and had gone to the town to see their families. There was nothing to be done but to tie our most brilliant lantern to the masthead in the hope that it might be seen in spite of the intense blackness of the night, and to wait as patiently as we could for news or daylight. The misery of those hours of waiting will not be easily forgotten. At last, between two and three o'clock in the morning, we heard shouting on the bank above, and N—— and Ali descended with no small difficulty the precipitous clay cliff. N—— fired several shots from his revolver to guide the donkey-drivers, whom they had left behind, as on such a night it was necessary to feed and shelter them, the donkeys being tied to bushes on the top of the bank.

The wanderers' story was short. Their stay in Keneh had not been long, but they found such difficulties in getting donkeys, the drivers saying that the road was bad and hard to find, that Ali tried to get one of the large ferry-boats to sail them up stream. The storm, however, was so violent that no bribe would induce the boatmen to run the risk of the sail. By dint of heavy bribes, the

donkey-men at last consented to make the land journey, and very soon the troubles began. They lost their way almost immediately after leaving Keneh, tumbled into half-dry canals, in one of which Ali lost his slippers, went higher up the river than the position of the dahabeeyah, and finally, after nearly six hours of wandering in the black inky darkness, in storm and cold, they caught sight of the masthead lantern and reached home, having left the donkey-men on the road inland, when they appoached the river to look for us.

And so, as "all's well that ends well," ended one of the longest, most fatiguing and most exciting days it has ever been my lot to spend in any country, and which will ever be one of those that remain freshest in my memory.

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## B L E N D A.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JACK URQUHART'S DAUGHTER," ETC

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"THE woman has behaved so badly, so shiftily ; those green-eyed women are always shifty."

The speaker was a tall, fair, florid youth of some twenty-four years of age ; the locality was a smoking-room in the house of Mr. Horace Ashton, the well-known surgeon, and the hour, to be precise, was five o'clock on a dull November evening.

" You see, she first of all encouraged it, and led me to believe that she and her husband would be very glad to see Tina married to me (she is only Tina's step-mother, you know), and then, when my big brother came on the scene and began making up to my little girl—as he does to every heiress—why, then Mrs. Fowler cooled off, like the snob that she is, and told Tina that she wasn't to dance so much with me, and that—and that, in short, *it wasn't to be*. It was a horrid shame ; don't you think so, Horace ? "

" It sounds rather unfair. But perhaps Challoner doesn't really want to marry Miss Fowler."

" Oh yes, he does. He admires her immensely, to begin with ; and then she'll have five thousand a year. He'd marry a witch for two more. You know what he is ; he doesn't care for Tina ; he doesn't care for any one but himself, whilst I——"

" But I don't quite see what I am to do, what part I am to play, or how I can serve you by coming to this supper party to-night," interrupted Horace sharply. He did not mean to be unsympathetic, but he was very tired, and he had heard *so* often how much, how *very* much, his young friend, the Honourable Humphrey Challoner, cared for the beautiful Miss Fowler.

" Well, I want your opinion and your advice, which you cannot give until you have seen the family. I want you to take particular notice of Mrs. Fowler, and to tell me what you think of her. She is years and years younger than her husband ; and some people admire her immensely. She is awfully vain, I should add, and more accessible to flattery than any one I've ever met, and I believe that you might talk her over, Horace, if you would only take the trouble. You see you are clever and I'm not, and Challoner is an elder son and a viscount, and I'm a younger son with nothing ; and Tina is only eighteen, and does not come of age until she is twenty-five, and she says it'll kill her to wait so long, and—and altogether we haven't a hundred-to-one chance of

getting married unless somebody or other intervenes in our behalf. Captain Fowler wouldn't oppose us, I'm sure, if he were left to himself; but his wife is against me, and he is a mere lump of clay in her hands."

"All right; I'll come to the supper, then, as you are so anxious about it."

"And you'll be there by 11.30?"

"Good."

And, true to his word, at the hour named Mr. Ashton presented himself at the door of Captain Fowler's residence, a small house on the east side of Davies Street, Berkeley Square. He did not look forward with much pleasure to the evening's entertainment, for he disliked strangers, and he hated supper parties, but he was glad to oblige Humphrey Challoner, of whom he was very fond. Upon entering the dining-room Mr. Ashton found himself in the midst of a very lively party, that numbered amongst its members two pretty Americans, two wealthy young Guardsmen—to whom the Americans were laying siege—the Fowler family, and Captain Challoner, whose account of the family Mr. Ashton soon pronounced to be correct.

Mrs. Fowler was a distinctly pretty woman, but not a pleasing one. Her expression lacked frankness, and her manner suggested an almost morbid vanity. She had a little air of making a speech every time she opened her thin lips. Miss Fowler was simply lovely, and far too charming to be married for her money. Captain Fowler was palpably under his wife's thumb—a chinless being whose fluid character evidently took the impress of the strongest hand that grasped it.

"A hopeless case," thought Horace, after the first few minutes' talk with his hostess. "This woman is an arrant snob, and the bare idea of becoming mother-in-law to a viscount has turned her weak brain; she won't give in."

Presently the conversation, which was somewhat general, turned upon defective postal arrangements. One of the American ladies had lately posted, with her own fair hands, a letter to a friend in the Regent's Park that had never reached its destination. "Think how many an important communication may have been lost!" she exclaimed.

"Letters are never lost," said Captain Fowler, speaking with all the assertive temerity of the weak. "If a letter is rightly addressed and posted, it is delivered."

"Not always," interpolated Horace. "I could tell a curious story—"

"Oh, do," interrupted a chorus of female voices.

"Ashton tells a story awfully well," exclaimed Humphrey Challoner.

"Please tell us your story, Mr. Ashton," murmured Mrs. Fowler in a patronizing tone.

"It is an incident, an episode, rather than a story," said Horace. "A story, we are told, demands three things—a beginning, a middle, and an ending. My tale has only a beginning. And now to begin; and I must make it short, for the hour is late.

"One November day, some five years ago, I happened to come in earlier than usual, at about 4 p.m., feeling very tired and desperately sleepy. I ordered tea to be brought up at once, but before I had finished my second cup I fell fast asleep, with a newspaper and some letters that my servant had just handed me lying in my lap unopened, and my fox-terrier, Nell, dozing at my feet. I must have slept, I suppose, for nearly an hour, when I suddenly woke with a violent start that sent both newspaper and letters flying on to the hearth-rug, the former bursting its cover in the fall.

"When I had sufficiently recovered from the shock of this rude awakening to make any move, I stooped down and picked up the letter that was nearest to me, and which happened to be lying seal uppermost, and without even glancing at the address tore open the envelope and proceeded to read its contents. They were startling, I must admit."

"Was the letter from a lady or a gentleman, Mr. Ashton?" asked one of the Americans.

"From the former, and it stated that being weary of life, and unable to submit any longer to paternal tyranny, she intended to avail herself of her darling's oft-repeated request that she should fly with him, and that she therefore requested him to meet her 'at the terminus *here*' (where '*here*' might be, I knew not, for there was neither date nor address affixed) on Tuesday next at 4.15. I had scarcely had time to finish the letter, or to wonder who could have written it to me, when my servant entered with a telegram demanding an immediate answer. Whilst I was framing my reply Cuthbert busied himself with making up the fire, and in so doing came into active collision with Nell, whom he never could manage—and who at once began to bark in a way that drove me nearly wild. As soon as my telegram was despatched I looked round for the cover of the mysterious epistle, which I had decided by this time ought never to have fallen into my hands; but it was nowhere to be seen. I asked Cuthbert if he had noticed it—a long white envelope.

"'I suppose, sir,' he answered in an aggrieved tone, for he and I were often at issue where Nell was concerned; 'that that was what the dog had got hold of just now. I did try to take it from her, but I know you don't like to hear her bark. She dropped it at last, and I threw it into the fire, but it was just a mere pulp then. You couldn't have read what was written on it.'

"So the envelope was destroyed, and with it had gone every chance of my ever being able to restore its contents to their destined recipient. Cuthbert then proceeded to inform me that he had only brought me in two letters—blue ones—with the

newspaper, and there they both were on the table, still unopened. So this third epistle, which was unquestionably never intended for me, had evidently arrived between the leaves of the *Field*, and had slipped out when the latter burst its cover in falling from my lap. During that following Tuesday afternoon, which was an awful one, I often thought of the unhappy young victim to paternal tyranny and hoped that she came to no serious harm."

"But her name, Mr. Ashton," exclaimed the American; "we're all dying to hear her name. Was there no signature?"

"There was, but—Good heavens! You'll be burnt." The last remark was addressed to Mrs. Fowler, who in stretching across the table to reach some bon-bons had nearly set fire to her lace sleeve.

With great presence of mind Horace seized her arm with one hand, whilst with the other he drew back the candle, but only just in time to avert a catastrophe; and then, as his eyes met those of his hostess, it occurred to him, in a flash of revelation, that this diversion had not been wholly unpremeditated. "Her name," he continued, after a moment's pause, "was— But no! it is not fair to give up the name; it was such an uncommon one, too."

Oh, the look of relief that came into those light green eyes! If Horace had doubted for one moment the truth of his suspicions he was quite sure now that they were correct.

"It could not have been a more uncommon name than my wife's," said Captain Fowler proudly, as if his wife's uncommon Christian name reflected lustre upon the whole household. "I should think, dear, that you were the only Blenda in all England."

"Very possibly," said Horace drily.

The following day, Mr. Ashton, who received patients at home throughout the morning, was honoured by a visit from Mrs. Fowler. She had hurt her wrist in that little encounter with the candle, and had deemed it wiser to consult a surgeon. After giving the case his careful consideration, Horace hastened to assure his fair patient that there was nothing amiss; she had only been frightened, not hurt.

"That was a very interesting story you were telling us last night, Mr. Ashton," said Mrs. Fowler in a low nervous tone, as she was leaving the room. "Have you kept that wonderful letter?"

"I have. I thought I had destroyed it, but I came across it the other day in turning out the contents of an old dispatch box. But I mean to burn it."

"When?"

"Oh, before long. I cannot do it now, for the letter is at the top of the house, and I have at least half a dozen patients waiting to see me. But as you are so much interested in the story, Mrs. Fowler, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll burn the letter in your presence—I'll bring it up to Davies Street—"

"Yes, yes! But *when?*" very impatiently.

"Must I fix a date? Shall we say, then, when I come up to pay my visit of congratulation? Your step-daughter's engagement to my old friend Humphrey Challoner is an open secret."

Mrs. Fowler turned crimson with anger, and for a moment made no reply; then as Horace was opening the door she paused for the second time:

"Mr. Ashton, don't judge me too harshly. I was very young at the time—only eighteen; and I was very miserable. You don't know, perhaps, the evil of an over-repressive system of education. But, believe me, I thank God every hour of the day that I was saved from eloping with that—scamp. The miscarriage of that letter saved me. I went up to the terminus (at Portsmouth), caught a severe chill dawdling about in the cold, and was in bed for weeks afterwards. When I recovered my father was—*gone*."

"I do not judge you harshly, Mrs. Fowler. I do not judge you at all. It is not my place—and I need not add that you may consider my silence a point of honour. But you'll plead Humphrey's cause with your husband; won't you? Ah! I know you will. Good-bye."

"So my story has an ending after all," thought Horace as he rang for his next patient to be shown in, "but it might have had a very different one if I had only glanced at the address of that letter before breaking its seal. It is strange how the little thing and the great thing—that which is forgotten as soon as ended and that which is never forgotten—to our lives' end hang together."

## DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

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### CHAPTER XIX.

"THE BOYNE WATER."

BUT in 1688 and '89 Frances had many private engagements, in addition to engrossing topics of public interest, to occupy her, apart from Cherry's settlement in life. In June, 1688, King James began to show plainly whom he considered his best friends. As for his opponents, he imprisoned, to the scandal of all England, "the seven bishops," for refusing on their consciences to sanction his Bill of Indulgence. He created Dick Talbot Earl of Tyrconnel, and appointed Frances one of the ladies of the bedchamber to the queen, who made a wry face and submitted to the appointment.

In November of the same year, William of Orange, invited by the great mass of the English nation to take the crown in his wife's name and his own, landed at Torbay. John Lord Churchill joined him at Salisbury, and Princess Anne, under the guidance of Churchill's wife Sarah, repaired to the insurgent camp at Nottingham. The unhappy King James, learning the news on his return to London, cried out in despair, "God help me! My own children have forsaken me." In December he sent the queen with their infant son to France, and followed them precipitately to St. Germains, where Louis XIV. received and entertained right royally the fugitives from his own deadly enemy.

But if William was king in England, James still reigned in Ireland; at least, he was likely to reign till men had sold their consciences to the highest bidder. For even the king's hero, the Divine right man, the most Roman Catholic of Roman Catholics, Tyrconnel, followed the example of saner statesmen at that melancholy time of political falsehood and double-dealing all round. He received overtures from King William, and played fast and loose with the great Dutchman. You may be sure the little countess was at her burly husband's back in these purely mercenary manœuvres. However, early in 1689 all hesitation was over; James had appointed Tyrconnel his deputy, and revived for him the unacknowledged title of Duke of Tyrconnel. In return, a flag

was hoisted on Dublin Castle with the words "Now or never" embroidered on it by Frances' firm fingers, not without Cherry's shaking hands pressed into the service. That was an open proclamation that Ireland asserted her rights, one of the first at that moment being to plunder the Egyptians and work havoc and ruin far and near.

Now Duchess Frances had the opportunity of reigning queen in Dublin, and now Duke Dick asserted his warrant for disarming the Protestants and reducing them to such a pitch of despair that in horrified anticipation of another barbarous massacre like that which had befallen the Saxon settlers at the hands of the Celts in Charles the First's reign, the Protestant inhabitants of the capital, of the lands within the old pale and of the great towns in the north, began to forsake their shops, farms and mills, together with the fruits of their peaceful, if somewhat high-handed, industry, and to flee in bands to the coast, in order to quit the ill-fated country. In March, 1689, James, with his French supporters, landed at Kinsale, approved of all Tyrconnel's measures, and during part of the year which the king passed in Ireland, Frances had the honour of entertaining her royal master, as the wife of his representative, in Dublin Castle.

Over in England Lord Churchill, in the service of William, had been created Earl of Marlborough, and his wife was the all-powerful "Mrs. Freeman" with her so-called mistress and doting friend, Princess Anne, *alias* "Mrs. Morley."

Matters had assumed the appearance of a race for honours between sisters Frances and Sarah. Greedy eyes glittered, and ears on the strain for further good news itched apace, while Madam Jennings admitted that her two much-abused daughters had, after all, been wise women in their generation, wise wherein they had been most vilified, that is in the choice of their husbands. They had shown special forethought and discretion in furnishing pledges for the continued security and prosperity of the house of Jennings, whichever side triumphed. If James came to his own again, there was her Grace of Tyrconnel to plead for her family and afford those of them shelter who had fallen into bad ways and been mad enough to abandon the Lord's anointed. If William won the day, there was my Lady Marlborough to weep, protest and scold till her kindred the Tyrconnels were let off easily for their slowness of apprehension in a change of royal seats, and were either permitted to retire to France with the fortune they had been latterly accumulating, or else were suffered to take their places in the court of Ann Hyde's daughter.

One of the strange elements in Frances' present circumstances was the curious manner in which so many of her old acquaintances and allies came once more to the front in her history. A leading and pronounced Roman Catholic, who with Dick Talbot urged James to extreme reactionary measures, was a gentleman whom

Frances had known well in her youth, the same who had been master of the horse to the Duke of York when Dick Talbot was groom of the chamber, the same who had trifled with a girl's affections, and might have broken her heart if she had owned a heart easily broken. He was Harry Jermyn, who had ruined his fortunes at the gaming-table, and was now in a humour to lay aside his shilly-shallying, coxcombical airs and engage in a desperate game to refill his empty purse and regain his lost credit.

As for the Hamiltons, poor Count George's younger brothers, who had been Frances' brothers also once on a time, Richard and John, held high rank and were noted officers in King James's army—or had it better be called Tyrconnel's army, of which he was commander-in-chief? Both brothers rendered themselves conspicuous, John as a gallant fighter, who was slain at the battle of Aughrim, Richard in more ways than in fighting, though he was also a skilled and desperate fighter. It was he who, on the advice of Sir Richard Temple, Dorothy Osborne's husband, was sent in the character of an emissary of King William's to try to win over Tyrconnel from his allegiance to King James. Not improbably the selection was made with some reference to the fact that the accomplished Franco-Irishman had been a near connection of the Duchess of Tyrconnel's, and was the uncle of the Ladies Ross, Dillon and Kingsland. But in place of winning over Tyrconnel, Richard Hamilton, if he had ever been doing anything save grossly dissembling, was himself won back to the side of the Irish and French. It was he who led the Irish troops against Londonderry in the famous siege which lasted a hundred and five days, and was only raised after the garrison and townspeople had been reduced to their last two days' rations, when, as everybody knows, an English ship laden with provisions forced its way to the quay, and the blockade had to be relinquished. It was the same untrustworthy messenger and unsuccessful leader of the siege of Derry who in his command of the Irish horse at the battle of the Boyne performed such prodigies of valour as well-nigh to outweigh the collapse of the Irish foot soldiers. Frances must have heard much of her old friends the Hamiltons in those days.

Three kingdoms had come to the single throw of a battle at last, in spite of the reluctance of James to face the crisis. The battle was fought on a long summer day in the pleasant valley of the Boyne Water, and there was to be seen the pitiable spectacle which misrule and fanaticism had brought about, of father-in-law and uncle in one, on this side of the stream, and son-in-law and nephew on that, the two ranged in arms, the old man against the young, their hostile camps waiting for the signal to let loose the bloodhounds of war. So the Boyne Water was green and brown with the boughs William's men had broken off, by the king's orders, on their march, and with the muskets which the soldiers shouldered as they waded breast high, in the teeth of the enemy's cannon,

through the muddy water.\* And every man on King James's side, whether French or Irish, wore, in compliment to King Louis, the white cockade which was thenceforth to be the badge of the Jacobites. Most people have heard how William was slightly wounded at the beginning of the fray and had to hold his sword in his left hand and guide his bridle-rein with his wounded right arm in crossing the water. Hamilton, with the cavalry, seeing the ignominious collapse of the ill-armed, ill-trained Irish infantry, struggled fiercely in the bed of the river. The Duke of Schomberg, one of the greatest generals of his age, fell rallying the Huguenots whom Hamilton was driving back. But where were King James and his doughty viceroy and commander-in-chief, Tyrconnel? James was viewing the rout of his army from a neighbouring hill, his chief concern being that the road to Dublin might be kept open for his retreat. Tyrconnel, as if infected by his master's lack of spirit, and being himself totally destitute of the experience which might have availed him at a pinch, showed himself confused and helpless and hardly ventured on a blundering command. Never was man more unlike himself, and in that sense nearer fulfilling the old Norse superstition of being *fey*, or possessed by a spirit, the reverse of his natural humour, presaging dire disaster.

It was the 1st of July, with enough of time from the sun's rising to his going down for the news of the battle to reach Dublin before nightfall. All day long the capital had been in an agony of expectation, Catholics and the few Protestants who were not in prison or in hiding alike hanging on what an hour might bring of deliverance or destruction. Frances and Cherry had watched and waited with the other watchers for many weary hours. Once, under the intolerable provocation of suspense, Frances had assailed her cousin.

"I hear, Cherry, your fine husband, though he hath left the army years agone and retired to his Kent pastures like the clod he is, serves as a volunteer in one of the regiments of the would-be parricide. This Peter Thornhurst's death would be a good riddance. It would be easier to dispose of thee as a widow than with a living clog of a husband who is yet no husband at thy heels."

Cherry shivered.

"I wish no harm to Peter Thornhurst, or to any man," she said faintly.

Towards evening there arose a grievous rumour that James and his allies had lost the battle. At first the duchess refused absolutely to believe it; at last confirmation which could not be contradicted came in the news brought by the first stragglers. King James with an escort of cavalry was approaching, heralding the return of all that was left of the beaten army.

Then Frances walked down to the gateway to receive her

\* Macaulay.

sovereign as became a wife who regarded herself as seneschal of the Castle in her husband's absence. She did not, like Jezebel, tire her head and paint her face, for she was already in the full array of her hoop, her quilted petticoat, her lace "head." The roses lingering on her cheeks burned like fire, her eyes blazed with rage and shame. Why had she not been a man to change the fortunes of the day? This was a different meeting from any she had calculated upon—a very different meeting from those gay encounters in the old days at Whitehall and St. James's, when her flippant, girlish wit had been retailed for her master's benefit, or he had been one of the admiring lookers-on who watched La Belle Jennings dancing divinely in the coranto.

"Madam," said James, full of mortification and wrath, with the utter absence of tact which rendered him so much more unpopular than his Bohemian brother, "your husband's countrymen have proved themselves mighty clever at running away."

"I am sorry to hear it," answered Frances with such a turn of the neck as only she could have given in addition to her profound courtesy; "but let us give every man his due—your Majesty has won the race."

## CHAPTER XX.

### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

AFTER humanely forbidding any attempt on the Catholics' part to destroy Dublin before William could arrive, James left for Kinsale and embarked in a French ship for Brest, amidst the disorder and disorganization prevailing in Dublin, from which it was now the turn of the Romanists to fly. The Duke of Tyrconnel and the French commander, the Comte de Lauzun, gathered together their remaining forces and marched out of the city on their way to Limerick. Frances did not stay in the Castle to receive King William as she had received King James, or to witness the former go in state, wearing his crown, to the cathedral, to return thanks for his victory. In fact, a mission, as difficult and dangerous as it was important, had been committed to the duchess, and it was some consolation to her in the overthrow of her greatness to conduct it with her usual energy and promptitude. She was intrusted not merely with conveying to France the wrecks of her husband's fortune, but with taking back to the place whence it had come all that remained in King James's treasury of the loans and gifts vouchsafed by King Louis, and of the proceeds of such of poor Mary of Modena's jewels as she had lately been pawning and selling on her husband's behalf.

The better to accomplish her task, the duchess, with her sole remaining child, quitted the Castle before the duke left, and

attended only by Cherry, and a maid and a man—as in the old days of Bet Ball and Barty Knevett, went to a house on College Green belonging to a family of Jacobites whose fidelity could be safely depended upon. Two of her Grace's daughters who were in town visited her surreptitiously, all other visitors were strictly forbidden lest attention should be drawn to her movements and to the effects she was carrying away with her. One or two of the heads of the great Roman Catholic houses were to meet her on the coast, and do what they could to aid her in leaving the country. Frances and Cherry were to lie hidden in the house on College Green till nightfall on the second day after the battle, when they were to proceed to Howth and take boat to a ship lying some distance off, to avoid suspicion, but ready to set sail with wind and tide for a Scotch port, from which, if the duchess did not receive contrary orders, she could go direct to France.

It was well that the journey, save for the little bit at starting, was to be made wholly by sea, for never had the roads, north, south and west, to and from the capital been in a more cumbered and unsafe condition. They were traversed by portions of the successful army, consisting of men of all nations, stolid Dutch, rough Germans, stern Huguenots, roused indignant Englishmen. And not all their great commander's calm humanity and love of method and order could keep his soldiers from losing their heads in the hour of victory, and indulging in spurts of lawless pillage and cruel rapine. The highways and byways were further haunted by lurking bands and single specimens of the broken army, men with their lives not worth an hour's purchase; hunger-bitten, consumed by thirst, mad from despair. Months after the battle of the Boyne, in some of the remoter districts in which the fugitives had been forced to take refuge, from which they could not get away, Irish officers and gentlemen were accused of having been guilty of highway robbery, as the sole resource left to enable them to keep their miserable souls and bodies together. The Irish word *toree*, which is interpreted "give up," is said to have been their challenge on such occasions. It was afterwards, under its modification "Tory," retained and applied to Jacobite gentlemen and their successors, half as a term of reproach, half as a party designation.

It would have been hard to conceive a more formidable and deplorable obligation laid on two women, than the necessity of their travelling with a child and a couple or so of servants on the ordinary roads, by ordinary means, at such an exceptional season.

In the middle of the intense anxiety and repressed bustle of the Duchess of Tyrconnel's last day in Dublin, Mistress Thornhurst was summoned from the room in which her cousin was issuing orders to the last, to see a gentleman who sought speech with Cherry. He was so pressing in his request that the people of the house did not know how to evade it, held it wiser to grant it, than to excite remark by denying the gentleman admission.

Indeed there was no proclamation out as yet proscribing her Grace the duchess and her friend or gentlewoman—whichever she might be. They were still free to go or stay as they might, and this importunate visitor might be a friend to inquire after their welfare and bring fresh instructions from the Lord Deputy. The gentleman was a stranger in that quarter of College Green and his pointedly asking for the gentlewoman might be a mere blind to conceal his real errand to the duchess.

"Go, Cherry, and see who the fellow is and what he wants at such a time," said Frances without an instant's hesitation. "I should say it is some scurvy knave of a tradesman come pressing for payment at the last moment. Tell him he hath had enough of my custom anyhow, to let his bill wait a little. Not a brass farthing shall the despicable rascal get from me for his pains."

Cherry, in haste and bewilderment, went into the white-panelled parlour, well mellowed with tobacco smoke, where the gentleman was awaiting her, and scarcely noticed in her excitement that Lady Charlotte Talbot, a little girl between nine and ten years of age, had followed her out of the room and was hanging on her arm.

Cherry was at once confronted by a gentleman, not a tradesman; a man in a sober riding suit of dark green cloth, with long boots, not in any of the uniforms with which she had been so familiar lately. He was a man past his first youth, a big man with clear eyes, white teeth and a ruddy complexion like one accustomed to wholesome country exercise and fare, who had led an honest, temperate life, but did not always resist a choleric temper. He had an air of authority verging on respectable tyranny, which bred in him a homely dignity that had something patriarchal in it. He was a gentleman whom middle life became better than youth could have suited him, whom age would still more improve and elevate. He was the typical squire who lived chiefly on his own acres, where he was a benevolent despot. Withal, he had the upright carriage and firm step which a taste of soldiering, such as belonged to a young squire's training, might have given.

She knew him in an instant though she had not seen him for four and twenty long years, not since she was a simple girl of fourteen. Now she was a woman of thirty-eight, who had known much of the world and its changes. He was exactly as she would have pictured him grown, only she saw him with other eyes.

He did not need to ask who she was. He had sought her by her name and she had come at his summons. Yet she was no more like what he had imagined her, than he had found the young girl answer to their previous acquaintance the last time he had seen her. She had undergone a second complete transformation. She was as far removed from the dainty trembling little bride he had wedded in St. Ann's Church, burnt to ashes hard on a quarter of a century before, as the fairy bride had stood leagues apart from the Cinderella of the Hills' house in Speedwell Lane. In the

meanwhile, though he had never lost sight of the flight of time for himself, he had clean forgotten, where she was concerned, the four and twenty years which had fled since the couple parted. This fine woman, very comely in the perfection of her autumn charms, was as handsome as any of her sex, with the treasures of ripe womanly wisdom and experience on her sweet lips and in her kind eyes. She was a fit companion for a mature man, one who could be an interested intelligent listener to his projects and troubles, a trusty councillor in his difficulties. Her entire appearance lent itself to the impression. She wore a sedately rich and matronly dress, which no disaster had sufficed to disorder. Above her brown hair, which had one or two silver streaks in faint contradiction to the habitually serene brow and tranquil dark eyes, she had the high arrangement of lace falling down in lappets on her shoulders, the fashion of the day, which added a couple of inches to her stature and emphasised her age with a stately emphasis, though as a matter of fact it was a style of head-gear exacted from both married and unmarried women of her rank, even before they had done with their teens.

She might have been a still beautiful matron of twenty years' standing, the benign mistress of a fortunate man's household, the honoured happy mother of stalwart lads and blooming girls. Nay, it seemed to his dazzled eyes as if the girl who held by Cherry's arm with all the freedom of a privileged intruder on her leisure and appropriator of her attention, was the shadowy reflection of the long line of grateful descendants with which fortune ought to have endowed this gracious motherly woman. Of all women Cherry had the very least of that meagreness, stintedness and dash of fantasticalness, in look and character, which men are wont to associate with single women, which single women need never bear except by their own choice and doing. The life of no wife and mother among her contemporaries had been richer in active human charities than Cherry's, and here was the result in the unconscious gentle stateliness and sweet graciousness of the bountiful woman, before the churlish man who had disowned her.

He was fairly staggered by a sense of his own native inferiority and unwarrantable presumption. There came to him also, for the first time in his relations with Cherry, a thrill of bitter rue and keen self-regret. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

It was Cherry who spoke first. "What is your pleasure with me, sir—Squire Thornhurst if I mistake not?" she spoke very quietly though her voice shook a little. She did not mean to reproach him; it was as a mere statement which explained itself, together with her wish to end the interview as quickly as possible, that she added, while she was not aware that she spoke with involuntary coldness, "You have come at an awkward time, naturally the duchess is much engaged to-day. You must excuse me for bid-

ding you say what you have to say at once, and letting me withdraw without delay."

When he still remained silent she first noticed that the child Lady Charlotte was with her, and supposed he was hampered by her presence. "Go away, Charlotte, and stay with her Grace," Cherry hastened to enjoin her small charge; "tell her I shall be back presently." She dismissed her irrepressible little companion and closed the door after her.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A PASS FOR A NON-COMBATANT.

At last he found voice. "Madam," he said hoarsely, advancing a step towards her, "believe me, I came to see if I could be of any use to you or your cousin in your sore strait. That must justify my intrusion at this hour. I had reason to be afeared you might attempt to quit Dublin and travel north or south. I could not answer to my conscience—no, I could not—for letting you perish, nay, for suffering you to run any grievous risk." He took a pocket-book from an inner pocket, and fumbled among its papers. Stout-hearted man of more than forty as he was, his sinewy hand was unnerved and his clear eyes clouded. At length he found two official papers, which he laid on the table before her. The one was fully made out and signed by King William. It was a pass for Mistress Peter Thornhurst to journey through the king's lines in any direction. In the other pass, signed also by the king, the name of the privileged person was left blank. "It is for my Lady Tyrconnel," he said stiffly, with another effort, "provided she will pledge herself to go in peace, and leave all treasonable machinations behind her. She is but a woman after all, though she is the late king's Deputy's wife, and her plight is like to be doleful. She may have less objection to let the past be forgotten if she be told that it was out of consideration for her brother-in-law, Lord Marlborough, that I succeeded in getting the paper. She will owe nothing to me, unless she and you care to accept my escort to a place of safety, where I swear to take you and leave you at your own discretion," he said hurriedly and with blunt emphasis.

"We are much beholden to you, sir," she answered, not mockingly, and with no lack of gratitude in her mild tones, though with inevitable dryness. "I care not to dissemble. I am assured you will not abuse any confidence given you. We are bound to-night for Howth, where we will get on board a ship that will carry us beyond King James's and Lord and Lady Tyrconnel's enemies. As for me," she added with a slight smile, "I am too insignificant a person to have foes."

"I know not that," he said discontentedly. "Bethink you what trouble your cousin and mine"—with a snort of cherished resentment at the words—"have got you into ere now. She may have introduced you into high company. Oh, yes, she is a countess and a duchess, and a very grand madam, but her ways are not those of people of honour—honour forsooth! of common honesty and natural feeling."

"I will not have her character blackened on such a day as this," she told him, firing up with sudden spirit and tenderness. "She is my kind kinswoman and old friend, who has sheltered me all these years."

He turned away as at a home thrust. Then he resumed, irrelevantly as it sounded, "You love France and French fashions." He spoke gloomily, coming back and confronting her like one who made a hard but just accusation.

"I know not that I do," she answered hastily, "not better than England and English fashions; though I may be perverse and unfair in my indecision, for when I think on't, I have spent nearly twice the time in France that I have passed in England."

"And you have been courted and made much of there," he continued, with evident rankling suspicion and resentment. "You have had reason to give the preference to France, though, unluckily for yourself, you were not quite free to give it."

She flushed up at his words, though she was able to reply to them with grave moderation. "I said but a moment agone that I had no such preference, Master Thornhurst, yet in truth I might have had it, though I know not that I was ever courted and made much of, as you put it. I grew up there, and I was not without friends; poor Count George and Count Anthony Hamilton were always friendly. Neither was Madame de Gramont unmindful, though, without doubt, I was not in her set—the court set. I had friends among humbler folk—old ladies from the provinces, with narrow incomes; soldiers' widows, on small pensions, not too well off, like ourselves, like Cousin Frances, I mean, before her second marriage. There were old Madame Le Brun, who had charge, in the absence of the proprietor, of that part of the *hôtel* which he and his family occupied when they were in Paris, and Madame Le Brun's granddaughters, her son, the grizzled one-armed captain, and Barty Knevett and Bet Ball. They married in self-defence, to keep up their English, a score of years since, and set up a thriving *laitière* of their own." She glanced up at him with the least little dimple in the still rounded oval of her cheek, as who would say, "you must remember Barty Knevett and Bet Ball, the odd man and maid-of-all-work, who went to France with Lady Hamilton and me, twenty-four years since? Why, you heard all about them in those days."

He refused to give any sign of recognition of the old servants' names, or of interest in their fortunes. He still spoke gruffly, almost rudely. "You might find better company than that at

home, if you had a mind to," he said, looking down and twirling the watch-guard at his fob. Then he suddenly broke out with fire and fury, "Cherry, you bear my name, whether lawfully or unlawfully, whether it be a misfortune to you and me or not, doth not so much matter, as that I cannot bide, whatever you may do, that you should take it back to foreign parts, to be bandied about in strange company, and soiled as some foul tongues soil all they touch. I call on you to come with me to England, to Kent, to take up your abode in my house of Three Elms, which is your home, as is only decent and proper."

She stared at him in amazement and rising indignation. "It is late in the day to make such a proposal," she said as cuttingly and haughtily as if she had not been the patient Grizel of her generation. "I refuse, sir, point blank. I will not go with you. The time has long gone by for your exercising the right to ask me."

"But I have the power to make you. Methinks you forget that, madam," he told her plainly.

"An' you dare to use it, against my will, at this date," she answered him, with fine teeth set, "I promise you that you will have your hands full, and that I shall think worse of you than I have ever thought yet. Better remind me at once that you and your side in this unnatural war are the conquerors, and that we —my poor duchess, who was as good as a queen this day se'en night, and me her hapless cousin—hapless in that I cannot save her from a second downfall, though I am still and ever her willing servant—are at your mercy."

He was taken aback and quelled by that reminder. "God forbid," he said solemnly, "that I should take advantage of your need. You must think badly of me, indeed, if you think that." Then he suddenly changed his tone, and asserted his own poverty and hard case. "Dost never think, madam, that thou hast spoilt my life?" he asked her sharply; "that I am more lonesome and forlorn than if I had been a widower twice over, for then I might have had sweet instead of bitter memories, if I had nought else. My hearth is desolate, and my name will die out so far as I am concerned in the next generation."

She stood silent and self-convicted, with bowed head and drooping figure, more pitiable, more wounded and more humiliated in her ripe womanhood than if she had been a young girl.

"My lady had her hour's fooling," he began again fiercely.

"No, no," she interrupted him eagerly; "you do her great injustice. She made a terrible mistake. She was over forward and meddlesome—it is one of her weaknesses; but she meant no harm. She thought to do us both, and me especially, a good turn."

"A mighty queer good turn," he said with a sneer which was not natural to him; "yet you stand by her still! I presume that

is your nature. I might have taken steps to break the monstrous bond—my uncle thought to do it; but I could not, when I was older and my consent was wanted, agree to rip it all up and stand the jeers of an idle, mocking public. Hast forgotten, Cherry, what a hopeful, hearty lad I was when I came up to London first? How I was ready to face the whole world, and believed that I had it at my feet? Now this is the end on't—a blighted and a sorry end."

"Oh! I am sorry for you," cried Cherry, breaking down and shedding the salt tears so hard to wring from eyes no longer young. "I have been so sorry all these years for my share in your wedding," speaking as if the cruel injury—the heavier part of which had fallen on the woman's head—had been inflicted solely on him. "Forgive me! Peter Thornhurst. Oh! forgive me, before we part. I was so young and so misled."

"If you are really sorry, madam," said Peter, half in a lordly way, half with eager wistfulness, "you can make up for it yet, so far as time is left us. Come with me when I bid you, and do your duty as a wife henceforth. We'll be married over again if you wish it, to make matters sure."

"I cannot, sir," she cried desperately. "What! leave her in her extremity and danger, when she has cared for me and let me be her friend all these years; when even in her first great loss she kept me by her side and never dreamt of sending me away, though she had her children growing up round her, and my absence would have made one mouth less to feed in her pinched household?"

He frowned heavily, ground his strong, white teeth, and stamped about in his riding boots, almost as if he had been Dick Talbot; for Squire Thornhurst was a man of a short, impatient temper, and latterly he had not been much used to contradiction. Presently he approached her with fresh importunity and newly-born passion for the woman before him—altogether lovely and lovable always, however lightly he had esteemed her budding youth. Now she was disarming him, and compelling him to sue where he had thought to dictate.

"If these are the chief barriers—my lady and your life-long friendship for her—I say not that it is not fit they should be taken into account. Benefits received have consecrated old use and wont, while you were ever over grateful, Cherry, mindful of the slightest favour conferred, and unmindful of the heaped-up measure of service rendered in return. But when you have gone abroad with your cousin and established her in comfort—such comfort as can come to a woman who has played an ambitious game, and lost when all was done—if I wait and follow and claim my rights, what then?"

"I cannot tell," she said faintly in great agitation. "Do not ask me now. We are no longer young," she went on in a

half-mechanical tone. "Better stay as we are, content with what we have saved from the ruin of our lives."

"I do not feel so old as that comes to," he protested discontentedly. "I believe I could begin all over again."

"Because you are a man, whereas I am a woman; which makes the odds," she told him quickly. "Get that dissolution of our foolish marriage, which you talked of a moment since, and begin over again, with another and a younger woman."

"Never! after seeing you once more, and seeing you aright, this time," he said with simple fervour, rejecting her suggestion with disdain. "Is this truly the last word you have to say to me, mistress?"

Her lips quivered, so that they could not utter a syllable; her kind eyes were dim with tears; she sought to pass him by in silence, but he caught her in his arms and held her there, snatching from her yielding mouth a different answer to his question.

(*To be concluded.*)

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## SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

AS I write, the nation is wearing external marks of mourning for the aged Duchess of Cambridge, and the effect, on park and church and theatre, is curious to note. Even in the most fashionable society, there is a large number of persons who never wear complimentary mourning, having a prejudice against it that has all the effect of a principle, though it takes its root in a bit of superstition. Many people entertain the belief that if they don mourning for one who is not related to them, they will certainly soon after be obliged to wear it for some one who is. This is silly and childish, of course, but it is an article of faith with many, and this being so, one can hardly blame them for acting in accordance with it. The consequence is that there is always, in times of general mourning, a sprinkling of well-dressed persons who wear colours. It is a matter of good taste that these colours shall be of a subdued and quiet kind, however.

On the other hand, the ladies of strongly Radical tendencies decline to wear mourning for very different reasons. Their colours are brilliant, indeed; as emphatic as their opinions. Belonging to this "opposition" faction is a lady whose toilet of brightest terra cotta made some sensation in the park on one of the sunniest mornings of this week. While all around her were in black, white and black, or grey, she moved with a self-assertive air in her gaudy gown, provoking much comment of a kind that she would not have been pleased to hear.

Were the Queen to appear more in public, her commands on the subject of mourning would be more universally attended. Her Majesty possesses the faculty of observation in a remarkable degree. Very little escapes the Royal eye, and a costume such as the one described above would elicit a stare of disapprobation which would not be soon forgotten by its recipient. But our Queen is so rarely seen among her subjects that they venture to disregard her wishes in these matters. It must be said, however, that the great majority at once put themselves into neutral grey or black and white, and make their servants wear mourning liveries. At "prayerbook parade," on Sundays, during the ten days' mourning, the grey costumes were numerous. Perhaps the prettiest was a Redfern tweed, embroidered in black, and worn with a little coat, the lapels of which were embroidered to match,

and thrown back from a white cloth waistcoat embroidered in black also. The little black Alsatian bonnets are very becoming to pretty faces and are worn very far back on the head. One lady appeared, early as the season was, in a dress of striped black silk opening over black lace in front, and with long lace sleeves beginning under jet epaulets upon the shoulders and reaching to the hem of the dress. Through these were visible the plain silk sleeves beneath them.

One of the smartest audiences of the year assembled to see Mrs. Arthur Stannard's new play "Rumour," at the Vaudeville, early in April. The plot is founded upon a story told in "Garrison Gossip," and in it are the materials for a good play. A knowledge of the "business" of the stage is the point in which Mrs. Stannard proved herself to be lacking. Trivial as this may seem, as compared with the construction of a play, it is of the highest importance when the piece comes to be put upon the stage, and it is one of the principal difficulties of the dramatist so to dispose of his *dramatis personæ* that they never encumber or interfere with each other. "Rumour" may yet be successful, and hold the boards as "Bootles' Baby" does, if recast in a mould that will include these exigencies.

The success of Mr. Richard Mansfield as Richard III. is beyond the expectations of even his most sanguine friends. The Globe is crowded nightly with an audience that proves the falsity of the saying that "Shakespeare spells bankruptcy." The Lyceum, with "Macbeth," joins issue with the Globe in disproving this.

"Sweet Lavender" has now reached its 400th representation. It is a pretty play that pleases all but the cynic and the fanatical adorers of burlesque, who devote their appreciation so entirely to that form of art that none is left for pure comedy.

"Dorothy's" long run is over, and the career of "Doris" is begun, with the same sweet-voiced cast. The verdict of the public has not yet been pronounced upon this, but it will probably be favourable. "Paul Jones" is a great success, and commands the smartest audiences in London. "Nadgy" is over. "Still Waters Run Deep" is being played at the Criterion, and no one should miss seeing Mrs. Bernard Beere in this. She proves how much intense earnestness of grip upon one part can do towards deepening the tone of an entire play.

Under the title of "A Cycle of Verse," a young girl has just brought out a volume of poems. To judge by her muse-like portrait in the frontispiece of the volume, she is as poetic of aspect as some of her lyrics are melodious in rhythm. One of the best of these is entitled "The Greatest Books."

"There are two books I love to read,  
So fair are they, so deep indeed,  
And strangely true; that when I dare,  
View from beneath their covers fair,

What to me is plainly writ,  
I feel unworthy—little fit,  
To be the one to recognize  
The mystic lore that in them lies.  
I—of all ! For never a sage  
Of these dear works could solve a page,  
Or guess their aim; or even tell  
As I—one hundredth part as well—  
The boundless love, the trust that lies  
In those two books—my dearest's eyes.”

Certain lapses here and there appear to show that English is not the mother-tongue of the poetess, a belief that is strengthened by her name, Hélène E.A. Gingold, and yet she seems to be familiar with the poets of the last century. In the following extract, the traces of this knowledge are strangely combined with the colloquialism of our own day :

“ What shall I wish thee,  
My bonny and gay ?  
That thy life's season be  
One long sweet May.  
Come hither, laughing one,  
Come to me, fair,—  
See how that dear old sun  
Strays on thy hair ! ”

And in the same poem, which is called “ To Idyline,” the authoress’ youth makes her set down the age of forty years as somewhere near life’s close.

Some of the lines “ On a Young French Prince ” are admirable.

It must often have occurred to readers of the daily and weekly papers that some of the best writing, worthy of a permanent place in literature, is necessarily ephemeral. A leader that appeared on “ Mothers,” in the *Daily News* a short time ago, is so full of wit and humour that it recalls this idea. It is written about those mothers who never talk on any subjects but those connected with the nursery, and whose condition of mind has been fully discussed in an American paper called *Babyhood*. In this publication, the problem of comfortably combining motherhood with attention to current literature has apparently been discussed at some length. One lady’s heart yearns, she says, “ over the poor mother who has literary aspirations that conflict with the grandest of all aspirations and realizations, motherhood ; ” and she goes on to say that her own four children have developed her more than any number of books could do. But what is to become of us if women are never to have any higher ambition than the one that this American lady describes as “ the grandest of all aspirations ? ” And if literature is to be sacrificed to the nursery and its little inmates, what will the latter, when they begin to appreciate books, think of their mothers ? Surely books and babies can be enjoyed together. Well-conducted babies spend most of their time in sleep. Is the mother to be lost in contemplation of the cradle and its contents

while the latter slumber? Even the lower animals permit themselves to go about the ordinary avocations of their lives while their young are comfortably asleep. And they cannot hire nurses as humans can.

If women must be "all mother," and unable to disengage their thoughts from their babies, why do they dine out? Thus asks the writer in the *Daily News*. It is cruel to entertain a man all through a long dinner with nursery talk. Hostesses should send the mothers down in couples, instead of following the usual plan, when this enthusiasm for nurseries exists. The ladies would then enjoy themselves thoroughly, both talking at once and neither listening. Some such plan might be adopted in the interests of men who do not enjoy hearing about the sayings and doings of other men's children.

People who ride hobbies are not fit for festive scenes. Dinner seems a very long and dull affair, however excellent it may be as dinner, when one's companion dilates upon one solitary subject during its entire length. Men can be quite as great bores as "mothers" whose hobby is the nursery. I remember once being mentally prostrated after a two hours' dinner at which the gentleman selected for me by the hostess talked cremation the whole time. It is not the most agreeable of topics at any time. I suppose we all have our hobbies, but we should ride them in seclusion; and, above all, let us hide them away at the sacred hour of dinner, and take a hint from the succession of courses, and let our conversation deal with a large variety of topics, all lively and serene.

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